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Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party

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Contents

December 1979 Volume 23 Number 12

Focus 2

Corby and the Steel Crisis • The Swedish Variant
The Decline of the US Economy • The Sale of the Century

Peter Leonard
Restructuring the Welfare State 7

The welfare state is now under profound attack. Peter Leonard, Professor of Applied Social Studies at Warwick University and a member of the Communist Party's Social Services Committee, looks at the nature of the welfare state, its growth under social democracy and the present Thatcherite attack.

Paul Corrigan
Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy 14

What did the Tory victory in May mean in terms of popular consciousness? Paul Corrigan, the Communist Parliamentary Candidate for Coventry North-East, argues that it represented an important setback for mass social-democratic consciousness — and looks at some of the implications for the Left.

Interview with Vishnu Sharma 18

The recent events in Southall have highlighted the importance of the Indian Community in Britain. We publish here an interview with Vishnu Sharma, until recently President of the Southall Indian Workers' Association and also a member of the Communist Party's Executive Committee. The interview was conducted by Dave Cook.

N Dollezhal and Y Koryakin
The Soviet Nuclear Energy Programme 23

We publish here extracts from an important Soviet article on problems of nuclear development in the USSR. It has already aroused widespread interest and comment in Britain.

Discussion 26

Laurence Harris **The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance**
The discussion continues.

Reviews 28

John Saville — G D H Cole and Socialist Democracy
Ros Brunt — Feminist Review and MF
Dave Triesman — City, Class and Power — Capital and Land

Notes 32

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Orders and subscriptions
Usual agents or Central Books Ltd, 14 The Leathermarket, London SE1 3ER

Subscription rates for 1 year
Inland: individuals £6, institutions £8
Overseas: individuals £8, institutions £10

The editor welcomes contributions for publication in the journal. Further details if required from the editorial office.

Design Anna Aubrey and Peter Hammarling
Typesetting Dessett Graphics Ltd, 01-251 0486
Printed by Farleigh Press Ltd (TU), Watford, Herts

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London WC2E 8HY

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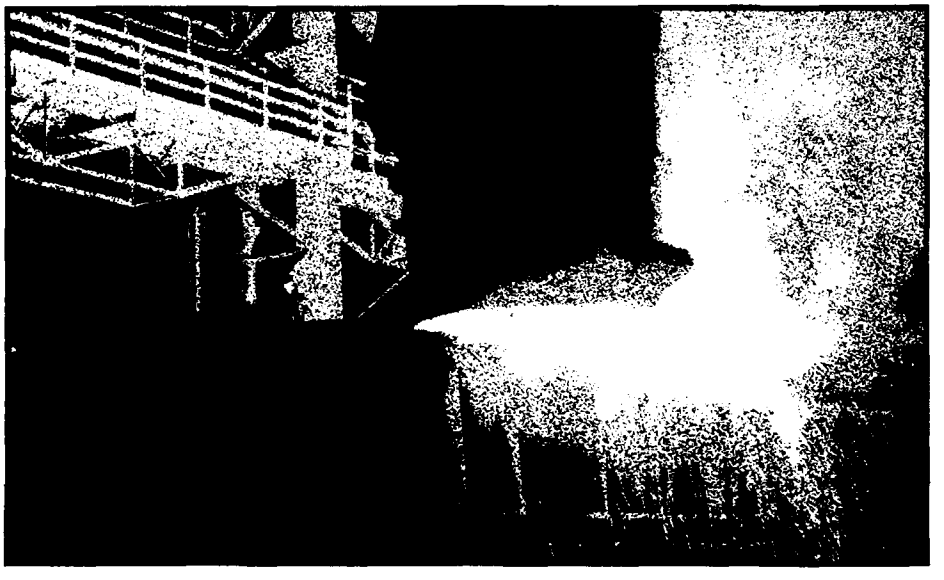
CORBY AND THE STEEL CRISIS

On November 1st of this year the British Steel Corporation announced the imminent closure of its iron and steel making plant at Corby in Northamptonshire. By March 1980 some 5,500 workers lose their jobs and unemployment in the town will rise to around 30%. The reaction of workers to this announcement was immediate. In an unprecedented display of militancy the industry's largest trade union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, called for an overtime ban throughout the industry, a series of selective strikes, and other sanctions against the Steel Corporation. Their aim is to force the Government to keep Corby open, and to stem the tide of closures and redundancies which is engulfing the industry. Over the past decade employment has declined from 250,000 in 1970 to under 200,000 today, and is likely to fall even more during the 1980s.

The present crisis in BSC is the result of two factors; an overambitious expansion programme in the early seventies and a slump in the demand for steel. In 1972 the Corporation launched a costly ten-year investment programme under which older plants such as Corby or Shotton in North Wales were to be phased out. The production of bulk steel was to be concentrated on big and comparatively new coastal plants such as Redcar, Port Talbot and Llanwern. The idea was to exploit the economies of large-scale production to make cheap steel for sale both at home and abroad, especially in the Common Market where export opportunities were seen as virtually unlimited. This strategy has been a disaster. After rapid growth in the 1950s and 60s, the demand for steel in Western Europe and Japan collapsed in the economic crisis of 1974 and has stagnated ever since; the United States is now protecting its steel industry against foreign competition, socialist and Third World countries are producing more of their own steel and some of them are even beginning to export; plastics are replacing steel in many areas; and the pattern of expenditure in advanced countries is shifting in directions which require little or no steel, such as services or electronic equipment. The huge increase in demand which BSC anticipated has failed to materialise. Its sales have fallen and it is losing money: £440 millions in 1977-78 and over £300 millions in 1978-79. The Corporation has a lot of excess capacity and is fighting desperately against foreign competition, both in the home market and abroad. In meeting this competition it is severely hampered by the fact that the pound sterling is overvalued, and many foreign producers are heavily subsidised.

Given these disadvantages and the general condition of world steel markets, it is hardly surprising that BSC is losing money. But its losses should be seen in perspective. They consist mainly of interest charges, and are considerably smaller than those of many continental steel producers. If interest charges are excluded and we look at operating costs alone, BSC lost only £5 per tonne of crude steel in the last financial year. This is much less than the losses made by Salicar of France (£32) or Italsider of Italy (£21); and even Salzgitter of Germany lost £10 per tonne. If BSC had been competing on equal terms, with a realistically valued pound, its performance would have been much better. It would certainly have covered its operating costs!



The Tories are unconvinced by this arguement, however, and in their obsessive drive to cut public expenditure they are refusing to continue subsidies to BSC. In an effort to cut its losses the Corporation is accelerating its closure programme and shutting plants which were expected to remain open for several more years. It is also contemplating the closure of some of the big and fairly modern coastal plants which formed the backbone of its 1972 expansion strategy. Llanwern is widely tipped as a likely candidate. This latter development has thoroughly alarmed the steel unions who are now worried for the future of their industry, and believe they are fighting a last ditch battle for survival. Their fears are reinforced by rumours that Britain may abandon bulk steel making altogether and rely on imports from South Korea and other Third World countries. The unions are also outraged by the brutal way in which BSC is now forcing through its policies without consultation or negotiation. These factors help explain why the steel unions are so determined to resist the closure of Corby and other steelworks.

But the main factor influencing their behaviour is the militancy of the people of Corby itself. At the first hint of closure in February, workers inside the Corby plant linked up with other members of the community to form a defence committee, ROSAC (Retention of Steelmaking at Corby). They set out to mobilise all sections of the community — teachers, housewives, shopkeepers and many others in addition to steelworkers — in the mass campaign to save the steelworks and their town. In the months between the initial hint of closure and the final announcement by BSC in November they have built a tremendous base of support. The militancy of this campaign has encouraged the national steel unions to take a firm stand against closures. Their struggle shows clearly the potentialities of what communists call the 'broad democratic alliance', and indeed communists have played an active role in the campaign.

What are the alternatives to the present BSC strategy? One possibility is simply to

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maintain the *status quo* and keep existing plants in operation. This would mean subsidising BSC, but savings would be made in other directions. Indeed, it has been shown that, under present economic conditions, it is cheaper to provide employment by keeping Corby and similar plants open, than close them down and pay the workers concerned unemployment benefit. Moreover, BSC's estimates of the effect of closure on their own costs are wildly overoptimistic, and their present strategy will save them very little money. Under this strategy tens of thousands of workers will lose their jobs, huge amounts will be paid out in redundancy payments and social security, and then, at the end of the day, BSC will find itself in much the same financial position as it is now. Indeed, followed to its logical conclusion, this strategy will lead to progressive disappearance of the steel industry in Britain as plant after plant is shut down in a desperate attempt to make a profit. When the social and economic consequences of such a decline are taken into account, it is clearly better to continue the subsidies to BSC.

A second possibility is to improve the competitive position of BSC by devaluing the pound or restricting imports of foreign steel and steel products such as motor cars and ships. If successful these would produce a significant short-term improvement in the Corporation's financial position. Import controls are often criticised on the grounds that they export unemployment to other countries and may provoke retaliation. Whilst the criticisms are often exaggerated they do contain a germ of truth. Moreover, devaluation and import controls would not themselves solve the long-term problems of the steel industry, although the latter would certainly be necessary as part of a wider economic strategy.

The problems of the steel industry are mainly the result of Britain's general economic decline and a shrinking domestic market for steel. To reverse this decline and generate a rising demand for steel, is, of course, very difficult under present world economic conditions, but is not impossible. It requires a radical break with the past, an attack on the bastions of capitalist power in our society, and the implementation of an effective system of socialist planning. Steelworkers are beginning to recognise this fact, and their struggle is becoming increasingly political in character. Once before, in the campaign for steel nationalisation, they have fought a tenacious battle for the future of their industry. This time they must go even further and campaign for socialism, for only in a socialist economy will their future be secure.

THE SWEDISH VARIANT

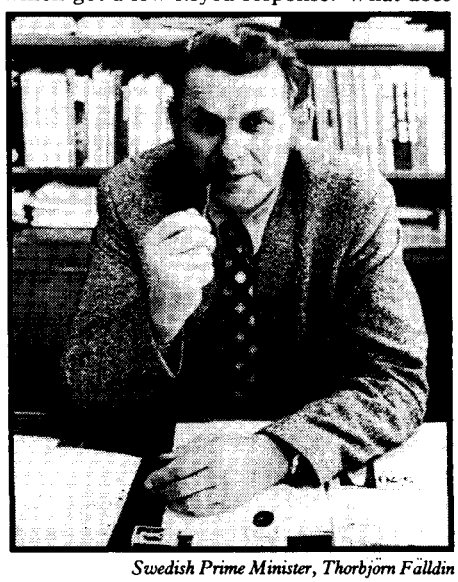
The Swedish General Election in September resulted in a second consecutive defeat for the Social Democrats by the narrowest possible margin, and in a major advance by the most right wing of the three bourgeois parties, the so-called moderates. The Social Democrats, the SAP, advanced in the northern depressed regions (and in some southern more recently industrialised areas as well), while suffering a setback in the big cities and their suburbs. In the latter the right wing moderates made their most spectacular gains. There are, then, certain similarities with the May elections in Britain. However, within the broader European context of Social Democratic crisis and rising and increasingly aggressive conservatism — a pattern from which Austria provides the only current exception — it is necessary to spell out the specificities of the Swedish case.

First of all, the economic situation is different. The international economic crisis has cut much less deeply into Swedish capitalism than in most other developed countries. The crisis is there, with a two-digit inflation, rising unemployment and falling real wages. But the main Swedish multinationals remain competitive on the world market. For example, with a much smaller home market, about a seventh of the population of Britain and without any vast employer-provided fleet of cars, Sweden has two profitable private automobile companies. Inflation stays, by and large, within the 10-15% range, and officially registered unemployment is below 3%. Unemployment is kept relatively low through massive measures by the state, worn out workers are pensioned of *en masse* before retirement age, the Labour Market Board finances a large number and substantial retraining of jobs, and state subsidies are poured into the ailing and shrinking textile, steel and shipbuilding industries. These policies not only continued but were even expanded by the bourgeois governments after 1976, as it was they who had to administer the crisis, which broke out in Sweden shortly after the 1976 elections.

Another outstanding feature of Sweden is the strength and stability of its party system. In a country with proportional representation, above a 4% threshold, Sweden has had the same five parties represented in parliament for forty years, all of them with relatively large membership, (though of a varying size). They are the moderates (up till a dozen years ago officially called the Right), the Liberals (the People's Party), the Centre Party (up till twenty years ago the Farmers' League), the Social Democrats, and the Communist Party. Since around 1970 these five parties have been described by the mass media as being divided into the 'bourgeois' and the 'socialist' blocs. (In the Cold War days, there was another division, the 'four democratic parties' and the Communists). The rate of voting has tended to increase over the last decades and has been between 91 and 92% in the three latest elections.

Now, within this rather particular national situation, do the last elections imply a crisis of Social Democracy and the emergence of a new right? Answer: only marginally and with important qualifications.

Swedish Social Democracy remains the far largest, best organised and best financed party of the country. It is the party the British Labour Party would become, if all Tony Benn's proposals of constitutional and organisational reform were adopted and fully carried through. In this year's elections it got 43.6% of the vote, compared to 42.7 in 1976 and 43.6 in 1973. The Social Democratic campaign was, as always, large-scale, well run and fully supported by the apparatus of the manual workers' confederation. But politically it had a low profile. It presented a more active employment policy — 'Vote back security' — was a major slogan — while wooing the marginal voters in the centre. The SAP drew the teeth out of Centre Party environmentalism rather successfully by refraining from explicit positive advocacy of nuclear energy after the Harrisburg accident and by proposing legislation against insecticides and herbicides in forestry and agriculture, which the strong kulak interests in the Centre Party found hard to swallow. In the final stages of the campaign the SAP committed itself basically to maintain the inflation-fuelled tax privileges of the house-owners. (In Sweden house-ownership is much more a middle class phenomenon than in Britain). In sum, a low-keyed campaign which got a low-keyed response. What does



Swedish Prime Minister, Thorbjörn Fälldin

photo: Bertil Reibrandt

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worry some Social Democrats, and rightly so from their point of view, is the slow but secular tendency of decline, both in terms of votes and organisational implantation, of the party in the major urban centres.

The Swedish welfare state is not yet under significant attack. But the fact that the internally quarrelling bourgeois parties were able to win a second election after having had to administer the first serious economic crisis of the country since the 1930s, shows that the welfare state and employment policies are no longer exclusively identified with the SAP. And while it is true that the crisis has not reached and is unlikely (in the foreseeable future) to reach dramatic proportions in Sweden, it is clear that the classical Swedish Social Democratic model of favouring private capital accumulation and concentration while maintaining full employment and personal income redistribution has come to a point where it can no longer advance. Swedish industry is in the first beginning of a major restructuring which will either entail major costs to be borne by the workers and employees or a quite new policy of public direction in confrontation with private capital and with its control and use of the emerging new electronic technologies. For this dilemma the SAP is still unprepared.

Opposition leader, Olof Palme

The Moderate party campaigned for lower taxation, limitation of the public sector, quality and discipline in the schools and for law and order. It increased its share of the vote from 15.6 to 20.4% and became the largest of the bourgeois bloc. Compared to the British Tories, however, it is rather like the Heath wing of the latter. It has not dared to launch a frontal assault on the welfare state. At its conference in early 1979 a motion, approved by the leadership, calling for an absolute stop to any further increase of the municipal tax (a proportional income tax in the range of 25-30%) was defeated. The moderate municipal politicians argued against it, saying we cannot *a priori* divest ourselves of resources to take care of the aged and the sick. In relation to the public policies of the most right wing Swedish party, Thatcherism appears a lunatic fringe.

A particular feature of Swedish bourgeois politics is the partial Social Democratic 'hegemonisation' of the two parties in the 'middle'. Before its successful urban transformation into the Centre Party, the Farmers' League had a long, special relationship with Social Democracy, dating from the crisis deal of 1933. The two parties were in coalition in the late 30s, together in the national four-party coalition during the war, and again in coalition in 1951-57. The Centre Party has kept a significant egalitarian, petty-bourgeois tendency very different from bourgeois conservatism, old and new. It emerged as the major bourgeois party in the early 70s when it managed to combine an environmentalist and localist critique of the Social Democratic model with rallying a large portion of generally bourgeois opinion as the best alternative to beat the Social Democrats. The incompatibility of the former line — in recent years focused on the nuclear energy issue — with the administration of capitalism broke apart the tripartite bourgeois government in the autumn of 1978. In this year's election the Centre Party was the big loser, from 24.1 to 18.2%.

After its very heavy losses in the late fifties and in the sixties, which from the largest made them into the smallest bourgeois party, the Liberals have been looking at the Farmers' League-Centre Party operation, of establishing a special relationship to SAP as a basis for a future comeback as a major party. The latter has used the Liberals, in the legislature of 1973-76 and by helping the Liberal minority government into power in 1978. But this is no longer very popular among the Socialist Democrats, and it has only brought new losses to the liberals, this time down from 11.1 to 10.6%. In the election campaign both the Centre Party and the Liberals took a firm position against reducing the public sector and the total amount of taxation. It is against this background that the peculiar aftermath of the elections has to be seen. The day after, the Liberal Prime Minister sent out an unofficial feeler to SAP asking whether the latter would be prepared to support a continued Liberal minority government, which was refused. Only after weeks of difficult negotiations could a new tripartite bourgeois coalition be formed, and then with the leader of the Centre Party as Prime Minister, ie, the election's major loser. The reason was that the two middle of the road parties could not possibly conceive of Sweden being governed by a conservative Prime Minister, even though the right-wing party was the major winner and the largest party of the bourgeois bloc.

The Communist Party had a good election, in still modest terms, advancing from 4.8 to 5.6%, its highest score in a parliamentary election for thirty years. The 'pro-Soviet' faction which broke away in 1977 got only 0.2%. The latter was routed even in its regional fief in the north, where it always had the majority of the party district and controlled the only Communist daily of the country. There they got 1.9% compared with 10.3% for the Swedish Party. With proportional representation, the Swedish CP has an open presence in national politics incomparable to the relatively marginal one of the CPGB. But the former is weaker industrially, given the enormously more centralised character of Swedish trade unions and the vast and dense fief of Social Democratic workplace organisation. The Party has in the 1970s become a major force among the young middle strata and public sector workers, and this time it also increased its working class vote in the southern urban regions, while continuing backwards in the depressed areas of the north, part of its traditional strongholds. In some areas it has a political significance comparable to that of the Spanish Party, getting about ten per cent of the vote in the two largest cities and in the university and hospital cities of Lund and Uppsala.

After the walk-out of the minority faction in 1977, the Party is now more united than ever since the process of 'Euro-communisation' began in 1964, and though about a fifth of its membership left in 1977, the Party has now more members than then, currently 16-17000. Its political weight is likely to increase in the future, as it is now becoming clear that the Social Democrats will not gain a majority on their own in the foreseeable future.

THE DECLINE OF THE US ECONOMY

For most capitalist states the subordination of their economic policy to the pressures of international capital is very obvious, but in the US for much of the post war period, hegemony and the dominance of US owned

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capital have insulated domestic policy from many of the constraints other nations faced. That phase, of relative autonomy of US policy, has now ended, and the recognition by the ruling class in the USA of their subordination to international, as opposed to domestic, capital was marked by a major reversal in monetary policy.

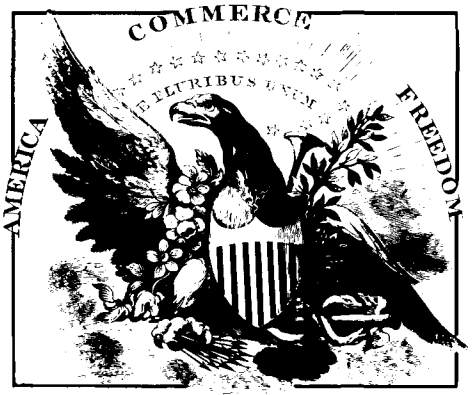
Paul Volcker, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, returned from the IMF meetings in Belgrade with a clear indication of the measures the international financial community required before they would stop selling dollars. The package he announced on October 6 raised interest rates sharply, tightened bank reserve requirements, and switched policy from stabilising interest rates to control of the money supply. In the following week the Dow Jones dropped 60 points. The economic significance of the policy is debatable, the interest rate rises of a year previously had done little to prop the dollar; but the political significance was obvious, since the package directly conflicted with domestic policy requirements. The measures would boost unemployment in 1980, a presidential election year, and drive many ailing US corporations into liquidation.

Contradictions, Marxists have long emphasised, have now sufficiently influenced appearances to be recognised even in the US. *Business Week* summarises their new found perceptions clearly:

> 'There is no easy way out of the dilemma imposed on US policy makers by the loss of US hegemony. Protectionist measures like capital controls might help in the short run, but they raise the specter of retaliatory protectionism by other countries. The only other alternative to the prolonged slowdown facing the US — international economic coordination — is preferable. But it is also unlikely because industrialised countries have never yet solved the problems of how to balance their economic interests'. (Nov 5, p136).

At root of this policy reversal lies the contradiction between the international nature of capital and the national basis of state organisation. The bourgeoisie have a common interest in ensuring the provision of the necessary conditions for the profitable expansion of capital. At a national level these are provided by various forms of state organisation: a legal framework and associated coercion, a medium of exchange, regulation of the credit system, lender of last resort facilities, etc. These are necessary conditions to allow the completion of the circuits of capital, and without them production and exchange would be restricted and disrupted. They are not of course sufficient conditions and state regulation is unable on its own to overcome the inherent contradictions of the system. But when other conditions allow, state coordination allows accumulation to proceed more smoothly and rapidly. With the increasing internationalisation of capital a domestic state apparatus is unable to fulfil these functions. The expansion of commodity flows, the growth of financial markets like those for Eurocurrencies, and the international integration of the multinational companies, mean that coordination must be international.

Given the lack of any international state organisation to guarantee the necessary conditions for accumulation, there are three possible institutional solutions. A dominant, hegemonic, state may organise the system. A coalition of powerful states may agree the rules of the game between them. Or individual nations may delegate the power to regulate the system to supra-national institutions. Historically, coalitions of states have proved unstable under the pressures of inter-imperialist rivalry, since concern to



promote the interests of fractions of national capital has taken precedence over the need to compromise to establish a stable order. Supra-national institutions, like the IMF, UN and EEC have lacked the sanctions to coerce powerful states and can only regulate the weak and dependent. Thus to the extent that the international economy has been co-ordinated, it has been done by a single hegemonic state. The UK took this role up in 1914, and the US after 1945, and a major factor increasing the depth and severity of the slump of the 1930s was the lack of an hegemonic power to organise the system. From 1945 by acting as policeman and banker to the capitalist world, the US provided the bourgeois security and monetary stability which together with the specific structure of class relations and economic conditions made the long boom possible.

The US also obtained substantial benefits itself from hegemony, especially since the dominant fraction of international capital for much of that period was US owned. But hegemony inevitably proved contradictory, since the direct exercise of this power undermined its economic base. The military expenditure, wars and capital exports, necessary to maintain this position was paid for at the cost of domestic productive capacity. While the US remained the largest single economy it was increasingly eclipsed by the rapid growth in Europe and Japan. In the early 1950s the US accounted for over 60% of the OECD GNP, by the mid 1970s only 35%, and the use of the dollar as a reserve currency required persistent balance of payments deficits which undermined confidence in the dollar. The decline in US power occurred at a time when the increasing internationalisation of capital and integration of world markets required more sophisticated state functions, and the depletion of the reserve army of labour and the balance of class forces in the advanced capitalist countries was pressing on profitability and accumulation.

The consequence of loss of hegemony and the depression of profits was the crisis of the 1970s. The breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, increasing instability in exchange rates and financial markets, growing OPEC power, rising inflation and unemployment, and general stagnation. Despite a series of conferences and summits the imperialist powers were unable to agree on or establish a new order.

While the consequences of the loss of US hegemony were obvious on a world scale, US politics and economic policy were for a while insulated from it. The appearance of power and autonomy remained. The small share of trade in US output, the size of US economy and corporations, enabled the mystification of independence to persist. The significance of the October monetary measures is that reality has now dominated appearance, and the subordination to international capital has been finally recognised.

THE SALE OF THE CENTURY

The cynicism which has allowed the leading publicists of the Tory Party to adopt as their slogan for the sale of public assets the title of one of the most vulgar and meretricious programmes on commercial television is a depressing foretaste of the motives which now govern housing policy and which will determine the hopes and fears of everyone struggling to improve their housing conditions.

The Government has published two 'consultation' papers on the 'Right to Buy' and the 'Tenants Charter' which illuminate the two faces of housing under the Tories. On the one hand, the destruction of public sector housing will proceed apace with the enforced

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sales of houses at knock-down prices, while on the other hand, the tenants unfortunate enough to remain in the council sector will be offered a major extension of their rights to include security of tenure, information and consultation.

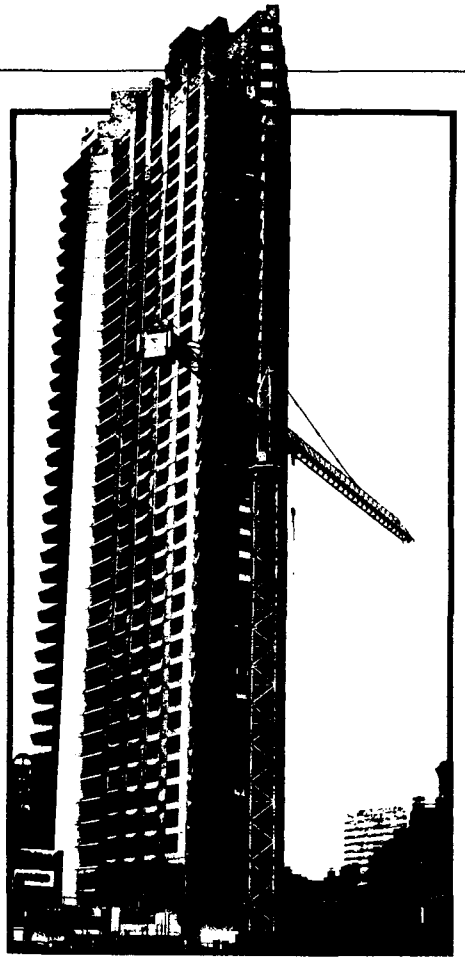
The two papers are more for information than for consultation, with the Government only allowing between three and four weeks for the submission of views on legislation which will fundamentally alter the role of council housing in this country, and they reflect the political determination of the Tory Party to implement their policies without delay.

The background to the introduction of these policies makes depressing reading. Under the Labour government, and as a consequence of the cuts in public expenditure after 1976, the output of houses in both the public and private sectors had fallen to levels last achieved in 1931 at the depth of the depression. Council housing starts for 1979/80 are now running at a level which will result in only 45,000 houses being started in the year — a lower level than that achieved by any other Tory government since Stanley Baldwin. The recent White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans for 1980/81 confirms that this catastrophic level of housebuilding will continue, resulting in a 13% cut in capital investment in housing, from £1.865bn to £1.623bn.

In the private sector, the outlook for the prospective housebuyer is equally bleak. The existing pressure for even higher interest rates is further fuelled both by the Government's decision to abolish exchange controls and by the record levels of US interest rates. The inevitability of the increase in mortgage rates from 11¾% to 12¼% as a New Year gift from the Tory Party to the housebuyer has now been admitted by the Prime Minister. The insatiable demand for funds by the building societies, in order to finance the ever increasing proportion of secondhand sales and the ever inflating level of house prices (rising by 45% between April 1978 and August 1979) offers no guarantee that still further increases in interest rates will not be required in order to attract yet further funds in the coming year.

This pressure for mortgage funds will only be exacerbated by the proposals for the enforced sale of council houses. These proposals will not produce a single additional home to meet demand, will not improve a single council tenant's living conditions and will ultimately hand to those lucky enough to buy a tax free capital gain at the public expense.

All the evidence from those areas where sales have already taken place indicates that



the dwellings sold are the most desirable among the council stock. It is the houses with gardens which are sold, not the industrialised high-rise flats, and it is the sale of these public assets which reduces the chance for other tenants to transfer from flats to houses and to improve their living conditions.

It should be noted that while the Tory proposals will give council tenants the 'right' to buy, the existing legislation which enables a council to sell voluntarily will not be affected. This means that those Tory councils who have become notorious by their policy of selling not only to existing tenants but also of selling any property which becomes vacant, will be able to continue to impoverish the public sector unhindered.

Neither should it be imagined that only the most desirable dwellings will be sold in the future; already the sale of municipal slums has become a feature of certain councils' policies of housing despair. The disposal of the blocks known as the 'Piggeries' in Liverpool has set a precedent which is already being followed by others, such as the London Borough of Wandsworth which after decanting the existing tenants from the 300 flat St John's estate in Battersea in readiness for modernisation is now considering the disposal of the entire estate on the open market with 'vacant possession'.

The proposed Tory legislation is designed to ensure the maximum number of sales in the shortest possible time and the maximum degree of disruption to the plans of any future Labour council or government. To achieve this objective, the proposals include not only a timetable to be followed in carrying out the sales and an enforcement procedure to be operated by the Secretary of State if an authority does not comply, but also abandons common prudence in commercial terms.

The proposals would allow the tenant to include up to three additional members of 'his' household in a joint mortgage if 'his' own income is insufficient, would allow the Secretary of State to define income for the purpose of calculating a mortgage, and would compel a local authority to grant a mortgage under these terms.

It is clear that these proposals would encourage tenants to over-commit themselves financially, with the likelihood of mortgage arrears and default, and would remove from local authorities any power to refuse loans to bad risk cases. In addition, if a buyer defaults on the mortgage repayments, existing legislation prevents the local authority from re-possessing the house either for the original buyer or for another tenant: the property must be sold to a third party, because mortgagers cannot sell to themselves.

In addition, the proposals are designed to hamstring future administrations by allowing 'options' to buy at a fixed price at any time within two years of paying a £100 deposit, and by allowing the local authority to sell only a part, even as low as 10%, of the value at the end of that period with a right for the subsequent purchase at any time of the remainder of the property. Significantly, any tenant entering such a 'part ownership' scheme to part buy and part rent their home would lose any protection under the security of tenure provisions of the 'Tenant's Charter'.

The proposals for the Tenants Charter are based on the consultations which took place on the previous proposal by the Labour government and in many ways represent an advance on the position which Labour put forward. In particular, the rights of succession to a tenancy are extended and the obnoxious proposal for the council appointment of tenants 'representatives' abandoned, although replaced only by the meaningless statutory responsibility to consult tenants on a defined minimum number of issues.

It is particularly ironic that a long overdue extension of tenants' rights should come from a Tory government after five years of supine inactivity on the matter by Labour.

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RESTRUCTURING THE WELFARE STATE

Peter Leonard

From Social Democracy to the Radical Right

For those of us who work within the health, education and social services, the magnitude of the changes that are being prepared by this radical right-wing Government are daily becoming clearer. Cuts in many services and benefits, and the increasing transfer of state resources from caring to controlling functions are a major assault on the post-war Welfare State. These cuts and other changes are causing widespread dismay amongst Welfare State workers; the consumers of the various public services affected are already beginning to feel their impact. For those on the left, the present situation is particularly poignant. We have been in the past deeply critical of the Welfare State, emphasising its deficiences, its timid policies and the oppressive nature of much of its ideology and organisation. And *now*, as it is being restructured, apparently more fundamentally than ever before, we find ourselves defending it!

A decisive move to the Right is bound to create a crisis on the Left, a crisis demanding a re-examination of both theory and practice. In relation to the Welfare State there are a number of questions of theory and practice to be asked. Are the new, right-wing changes simply a continuation and extension of previous Labour government restructuring policies? Are they due mainly to economic factors, the international capitalist recession and the problem of the declining profitability of industry in Britain? Do they, on the other hand, also represent new right-wing political strategies aimed at creating a reactionary populist consensus about state welfare within the working class? What should the Left's response be to such strategies?

This article can only begin to answer such questions. It will attempt

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public expenditure cuts and other forms of restructuring were introduced which have had increasingly profound effects upon welfare services and have provided some of the ideological softening-up necessary for the draconian policies currently being developed by the radical Right.

to do so by, firstly, commenting briefly on some of the problems involved in explaining the welfare activities of capitalist states; secondly, charting the origins and forms of Welfare State restructuring that have taken place under social democratic state policies; thirdly, identifying the features and ideological impact of distinctively right-wing restructuring; and finally suggesting in the light of the analysis of restructuring, some of the forms which class struggle around welfare institutions and policies might take in the 1980s.

PROBLEMS OF EXPLANATION

In explaining the welfare activities of a capitalist state, it is difficult to avoid over-simplification. On the one hand it is important to give full weight to the basic economic imperatives of the capitalist mode of production: the devising of new means of exploiting labour, the need for the continuous accumulation of capital and the necessity for maintaining profitability. If you look at the Welfare State from this standpoint, then you will see its origins as lying fundamentally in the needs of capitalist exploitation. The Welfare State then is simply a particular form of exploitation appropriate to a specific stage in advanced capitalism: the production of the required quantity and quality of labour power through education, public housing, health and social services. The idea that the Welfare State is primarily an advance for the working class is, from this perspective, simply an 'illusion'[1].

On the other hand, it is important to avoid the rigid economic determinism which is the danger of a perspective on the Welfare State which lays too great an emphasis on the needs of capitalism. The role of class struggle is also crucial to our understanding of the development of the Welfare State.[2] In Britain, the Labour Party and the trade union movement have been vital to the growth of education, health and social services. A proper understanding of right-wing social policy must therefore be based on an appreciation of its specific political and ideological strategies directed to the working class, as well as on the economics of the recession.

In this article, I shall attempt to examine the restructuring of the Welfare State under social democracy and the radical Right with an analysis which accounts for both economic factors *and* class struggle, for they are indissolubly bound together.

Ultimately, separating too rigidly 'economic' from 'political' factors is mistaken, for the dynamics of the capitalist system, its need to accumulate and maintain profitability, is essentially one of the class struggle of the exploiters against the exploited. It is this struggle which fundmantally creates the 'economic' contradictions which governments, both social democratic and right-wing, must face. Restructuring welfare services is a major strategy of state economic intervention here, but I hope to show that the *forms* of restructuring are influenced in a most significant way by political and ideological factors.

RESTRUCTURING UNDER SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

For twenty-five years following the end of the Second World War, social democratic ideology was a ruling material force in Britain. Based upon a Keynesian commitment to growth and full employment, it reflected the remarkable and sustained buoyancy of capitalism during this period. Despite the underlying sickness of the British economy, its continuing relative decline and deepening contradictions, nevertheless it was possible upon such an economic base to push forward, alongside other Western European countries, a particular form of social management of capitalism — the Welfare State. It was a form for which the organised working class in Britain had, through social democratic politics, long struggled. The ideology which supported it, however, contained a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, the Welfare State was to be committed to evening up the life chances of individuals and families in the pursuit of greater equality. On the other hand it was to be the foundation of the social reproduction of capitalist relations. Although the services which were developed in education, health, housing, and social security improved the living conditions of the working class as a whole, their fundamental purpose for the ruling class, unsurprisingly, was to provide, physically and ideologically, the labour power that was necessary for continuing capitalist profitability in an increasingly competitive international market.

That the origins of the post-war Welfare State lie in contradictions is evident in the history of all the major services. The Second World War demonstrated to the liberal bourgeoisie the value of a healthy, reasonably educated and secure working class. The Beveridge Plan and other social policies were formulated during the war and led to the establishment of a secondary education system, a social security and national insurance scheme, a National Health Service and other state welfare services. Although these services were clearly seen as functional to economic development in Britain, just as the plans for them had been seen earlier as important for war morale, they were not gained without working class struggle. Although there was at the point of the establishment of these services, a coincidence of interests between the working class and capital, nevertheless the ruling interests only conceded them grudgingly and in a manner which ensured that these interests remained dominant in the new services.

[1] See for example, W. Müller and C. Neusüss 'The "Welfare State Illusion" and the Contradiction between Wage Labour and Capital' in J. Holloway and S. Picciotto (eds) *State and Capital* Edward Arnold, 1978.

[2] See P. Corrigan 'The Welfare State as an Arena of Class Struggle', *Marxism Today*, March 1977, pp87-93.

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The contradictions between oppressive and (at least potentially) progressive elements in the National Health Service, in education and in social security can be traced to the balance of conflicting interests between capital and labour present in their development.

Thus two aspects of class struggle are evident in the Welfare State: at the overt political level, the struggle of the working class to secure material benefits for itself in the form of welfare services; underlying this, the continuing struggle by capital to ensure the reproduction of the necessary social relations through state intervention. The interaction between these twin struggles has produced contradictions in the Welfare State which, for social democratic ideology, is especially critical. For the Conservative Party, until the early 1970s, the role of the state as a manager of demand and a provider of welfare was, in practice, accepted as necessary for capitalist growth. Keynesianism and social democracy rule.

The End of the Post-War Growth

By the mid-1970s the post-war period of exceptional growth in state investment in welfare came gradually to an end. Under social democratic government, public expenditure cuts and other forms of restructuring were introduced which have had increasingly profound effects upon welfare services and have provided some of the ideological softening-up necessary for the draconian policies currently being developed by the radical Right.

Labour controlled local authorities proved to be amongst the most reactionary when faced with the growth of demands for direct democratic participation in local welfare policies.

What are the origins of this restructuring under social democratic government? At one level we can say that restructuring is a response to problems of the economy. The primary purpose of state intervention in welfare is, we have suggested, to ensure the social reproduction necessary for continued class domination. The problem for the Welfare State, however, is that this intervention contradicts the necessity for full attention to be given to direct capital accumulation.[3] The tendency for the rate of profit to fall can be seen as a form of class struggle which requires capital, increasingly through state intervention, to continuously restructure its own relations of production, including state welfare activities. Public expenditure cuts thus become necessary because state financing reduces the amount available for accumulation and profits and this inevitably intensifies the crisis.

Cuts and transfers of state expenditure are also undertaken to ensure that such expenditure is as functional as possible for capital activities to aiding industry, and also redirected *within* welfare services. This latter restructuring has been shown[4] to include attempts to adapt the labour force to meet the needs of capital more effectively ('economically relevant' education, changes in social security); to try, usually without much success, to improve methods of control over deviants (the development of 'intermediate treatment' and other forms of community control over delinquents); and to improve the 'efficiency' of state services (cutting 'waste', the development of corporate management in social government).

The foregoing analysis of public expenditure cuts and Welfare State restructuring might be seen as rather narrowly 'economic'. Does it give enough account of the various and complex levels of class struggle involved in the restructuring of the Welfare State under social democratic management? Emphasis on transfers of expenditure aimed specifically at critical and problematic areas of social reproduction, such as education and deviancy control, certainly identifies terrain upon which struggle is joined. But we must add here the more specifically *political* struggles at the local level which take place over restructuring. These struggles, centring as they often do around issues of housing, planning and public amenities, strike at the heart of the contradictions within social democratic ideology. The late 1960s produced a wealth of government reports on the necessity for 'community participation' and led to significant experiments, such as Community Development Projects. In practice, the unintended consequences of these experiments in the engineering of consent met deep resistance within social democratic political structures. Labour controlled local authorities proved to be amongst the most reactionary when faced with the growth of demands for direct democratic participation in local welfare policies. This resistance is all the more significant when we note how tokenistic, partial and 'managed' were some of these attempts at participation and community control: *any* challenge to the political structures of the local state often produced the utmost panic and defensiveness from Labour councillors.

Social Democracy and New Forms of Democracy

How are we to understand this deep resistance within social democratic politics to innovation in mechanisms of democratic control of the Welfare State? The answer lies in social democratic commitment to exclusive reliance on a particular political form: bourgeois parliamentary democracy. This commitment is connected to a deep belief in the neutrality of the state, an incorporation of the surface appearance of bourgeois political structures and a failure to acknowledge the class relations which are concealed by these structures. I am not suggesting that parliamentary forms are, from a Marxist perspective, unnecessary or redundant; rather, I would argue that they are as insufficient to meet the requirements of democratic control by the consumers of the Welfare State, as they are to meet the demands of workers' control.

Battles over the development of new forms of democratic structure have been an important part of class struggle within the Welfare State because they involve conflict over crucial aspects of the process of the social reproduction of capitalist relations. The development of local community politics committed to an approach which connects up issues of housing, planning, local industry and social services

[3]See Holloway and Picciotto *op cit* 'Introduction: Towards a Materialist Theory of the State'.

[4]I. Gough *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*. Macmillan, 1979 pp128-144.

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challenges that fragmentation of the political from the economic which is central to the ideological mystification required for effective and trouble-free social reproduction.

A further example of class struggle over restructuring under social democracy is worth noting here: the de-skilling and bureaucratization of Welfare State 'professional' employees. Alongside the state's search for efficiency and the introduction of corporate management techniques into welfare[5] has emerged signs that traditional liberal professionalism can no longer be relied upon to deliver state services with the degree of control, authority and loyalty which is required. This trend is most noticeable in local authority social services where job fragmentation and tight managerial control lead to the struggle to replace the semi-autonomy of professional judgement with the reliability of the state functionary. In the field of child care, for example, decisions on whether a family should be broken up are now frequently taken by senior management staff with no direct knowledge of the family itself. For the consumer of welfare provisions, the development of bureaucratization may lead to the experience of greater depersonalization in the services; for the employee it may be a step towards the proletarianization of work conditions. One of the effects of such restructuring of the work of Welfare State employees is to produce a contradiction parallel to that which occurs when capital reorganises labour as a result of the development of new forces of production: the growth of trade unionism and other material expressions of a growing consciousness of collective interests[6].

Of course, the growth of 'white-collar' trade unionism within health, education and social services can lead to its own contradictions. Union militancy which does not succeed in winning the wider ideological battle for support *within* the working class can, given the powerful intervention of state-managed media, lead soon to defeat. The public service unions' battles during the last 'winter of discontent' were successfully used by the Right to reinforce reactionary ideologies within the working class itself.

ENTER THE RADICAL RIGHT

What can we now expect from Welfare State restructuring from the Right? The most economically-determinant answer would be that previous restructuring was a response to capitalist crises and that if the nature of these crises remains broadly the same, then the logic of the restructuring of the 1970s will be continued into the 1980s: the change from social democratic to right-wing conservative governments will be of marginal significance.

There are two points to make here. Firstly, we can acknowledge that crises in capitalist profitability will continue to present the state with contradictions between the demands of social reproduction and of capital accumulation and that therefore there will be some major

This strand is right-wing ideology may grow with its bedfellow, racism, into a major onslaught on welfare recipients and 'deviants', especially if they are unsupported mothers or black youths.

continuities between the 1970s and 1980s. Much of the previous analysis will continue to hold. Secondly, right-wing ideas have already grown considerably in recent years[7] and these ideas influenced state policies prior to the election of a right-wing government. For example, the *Black Papers* on education have contributed to the reactionary framework within which the debate on the purposes of education has been conducted. But although we must recognise continuities in the restructuring of the Welfare State, we must also acknowledge the entry of new factors at political and ideological levels. We must explore the basis of a distinctively right-wing ideology of welfare, the implications of this ideology for policy and the limits and contradictions which right-wing social policy faces.

In a previous issue of *Marxist Today*,[8] Stuart Hall discussed the nature of the petit-bourgeois populism which characterises the dominant forces within the present right-wing Conservative

Important as anti-statism is to right-wing social policy, there are other, deeper ideological elements which we can expect to see in material form in the policies of the 1980s.

government. The radical Right emerges from a previous Keynesian consensus and, resting initially on petit-bourgeois support, demands more welfare state cuts, increasing profitability, and restrictions on trade union activity. The first two demands, in particular, were already familiar under social democratic governments, but underlying them was a theme of direct relevance to the Welfare State and which was to be authenticated in the experience of many working class people: anti-statism. The radical Right's demand that state structures should be cut-back and restricted has connected precisely with a widespread experience of bureaucratic oppression which social democracy, as we have seen in its reaction to demands for participation, was unable to acknowledge. Hall writes:

> 'In the absence of any fuller mobilisation of democratic initiatives, the state is increasingly encountered and experienced by ordinary working people as, indeed, not a beneficiary but a powerful, bureaucratic imposition. And this "experience" is not misguided since, in its effective operations with respect to the popular classes, the state is less and less present as a welfare institution and more and more present as the state of "state monopoly capital"'[9].

Paul Corrigan, in this current issue of *Marxism Today* provides more detail of the working class experience of the state as oppressive and alien. The ghettoisation and poor quality of council housing together with authoritarian housing management, for example, contributes to the legitimation of the policy of selling council houses. The experience of social security as a rule-bound and oppressive system confirms the policy of civil servant cut-backs. Of course, the anti-statism of right-wing populist ideology presents its protagonists with certain contradictions, for it may prove difficult to balance anti-statism against the equally important theme of increased state intervention in the field of law and order. For this, additional ideological elements are necessary.

Right-wing Ideological Themes

Important as anti-statism is to right-wing social policy, there are other, deeper ideological elements which we can expect to see in

[5]See C. Cockburn *The Local State: Management of Cities and People*, Pluto Press 1977.

[6]See H. Braverman *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, 1974.

[7]Hall, Clarke, Critcher, Jefferson and Roberts, *Policing the Crisis*. Macmillan 1978.

[8]S. Hall 'The Great Moving Right Show', *Marxism Today*, January 1979 pp14-19.

[9]Hall. *op cit pp17-18.*

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material form in the policies of the 1980s. Primary among these is a profound contempt for welfare recipients, for the poor and the deprived, which has a long history in the English Poor Law. We can see it as including a strong commitment to an invididual pathology model of social problems — blaming the victim — a model often acted upon in practice within social democracy too. But there is something more here, a strong whiff of longing for eugenic control of the lower orders. Keith Joseph, one of the radical Right's intellectual leaders, was in an earlier Conservative government responsible for initiating social policy research into 'the generational transmission of poverty': the mixture of fear for the racial stock and frustration with the failures of the Welfare State emerges clearly in a 1974 statement:

> '. . . a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and to bring them up . . . They are producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal education establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters'[10].

This strand is right-wing ideology may grow with its bedfellow, racism, into a major onslaught on welfare recipients and 'deviants', especially if they are unsupported mothers or black youths. It is clear now that sections of the working class have been successfully incorporated into this strand of ideology; it can be used effectively in policies which combine welfare cuts with increased repression. The importance of anti-statism, racism and individual pathology ideologies is clear to see — they provide invaluable legitimation for the state's management of the balance between social reproduction and capital accumulation. Apart from general cuts in provision, welfare services may be reduced selectively so that the 'undeserving' are punished, while the more directly repressive services can be increased in the interests of law and order. From this overall restructuring, increased attention can be given to enabling capital to engage in the more effective extraction of surplus value.

Contradictions facing the Radical Right

What are the limits and contradictions of these radical Right strategies? At one level, the fundamental problem which right-wing governments face, as do social democratic ones, is that there are, as we have seen, distinct limits imposed on state welfare intervention by the claims of capital on the surplus value which must be extracted if accumulation and profitability is to be continued. Although welfare expenditures are essential to social reproduction in advanced capitalism and perform vital economic and ideological functions, nevertheless they are not directly productive. The radical Right recognise this problem more clearly than does a Labour government which still harbours illusions that welfare can be further expanded and deepened without a direct assault on the capitalist mode of production itself. But to recognise a contradiction does not necessarily provide the Right with a more effective means of managing it.

When certain welfare expenditures are cut, the detrimental effects on private capital can be considerable. A reduction in public expenditure on the building of welfare institutions — residential establishments, hospitals, welfare centres — and of council housing, clearly affects the private building industry. Similarly, there are limits to which public expenditure on drugs in the National Health Service can be reduced, by restrictions and the levying of charges which reduce effective demand, without an adverse impact on the pharmaceutical industry. As Gough points out[11] both the production and realisation of surplus value is necessary to capitalism. Cuts in state expenditure aimed at raising profits (the production of surplus value) may have the effect of reducing demand and employment and thus the realisation of surplus value by the selling of the goods produced.

[10]K. Joseph, speech reported in *The Times*, Monday, 21st october 1974.
[11]Gough, *op cit* pp137-138.

The Working Class

Difficult though these economic problems are for a right-wing government committed to welfare cuts and transfers, the short-range effectiveness of its social policies will depend, as we have seen, on its ability in ideological management. It is here that the radical Right meets its most fundamental contradiction: the working class itself. No account of the development and failures of Welfare State policies is possible without a full recognition of the place of working-class struggle at every level. When it confronts the working class, the radical Right is faced with the necessity for fragmenting and disorganising the class in the interests of increased exploitation and repression. Specifically, the economic crisis, and the social policies which the Right develop in response to it, necessitate substantial increases in social control. The increase in unemployment, and the fragmentation and dislocation of social relationships which are part of the crisis, accompanies a reduction of supporting services in health, education and social security. Individual and collective 'deviancy', especially among the young, also grows, as does community action as a relatively unorganised form of working class politics.

This increase in deviancy and conflict demands not only increased

expenditures on deviancy control — on police, prisons, probation, and certain aspects of social services — but also requires careful ideological work by the radical Right as the contradictions between 'setting the people free from creeping socialism' and the increase in state repression becomes daily more evident in working class lives. Here racism enters as a most valuable base for this ideological work. The increased demand for ever-deteriorating services, in child care, education, housing, can be set in a context of scapegoating immigrant and indigenous black populations.

The radical Right has been particularly successful recently in the ideological penetration and disorganisation of sections of the working class; it is here that the ideological level of the battle must be turned, and the initiative grasped by the Left.

THE WELFARE STATE AND THE LEFT

What forms of struggle by the working class and the Left might develop as the attempts to restructure the Welfare State proceed from the Right? The analysis that has been offered so far is obviously a limited one. A great deal of work needs to be undertaken by the Left on the common and differential elements in Welfare State restructuring by social democratic and right-wing governments respectively. Of particular importance at this juncture is a deeper understanding of the material basis of the acceptance by most of the working class of the state as neutral and the effect of this ideological penetration on responses to specific forms of restructuring.

Even though our analyses are limited, the outlines of some of the targets and processes of a Left strategy begin to emerge. A central

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feature of such a strategy is, I believe, to be found in the demystification of the social democratic welfare state. Although we would dispute their attack on the German Communist Party (DKP) for its commitment to parliamentarianism as a platform for class struggle, Müller and Neusüss[12] have a strong, though over-determinist point to make when they remind us that social welfare legislation enacted by the bourgeois state has, in a familiar phrase, the effect of propagating the ideology of the ruling class as the ruling ideology of the working class. Again, in our belief in parliamentary politics as *one form* of class struggle over Welfare State restructuring we must not be blinded to its severe limitations. Holloway and Picciotto argue

> '. . . . . simply to oppose state expenditure cuts without more ado implies a view of the state as being at least potentially beneficial to the working class rather than as a form of capitalist domination, a form impregnated through and through by its place in that system of domination'[13].

Now, the Communist Party and the Labour Left *do* believe that the state can be transformed to benefit the working class and that historically it has been, despite all the limitations, used with some success as an arena of class struggle in securing welfare provision for the working class. But nevertheless, the warning should be heeded. Certainly, the left must do more than simply oppose welfare cuts, for we have seen that restructuring involves much more than expenditure cutting and that transfers in expenditure and reorganisation in the interests of greater control are equally important.

> 'The British working class has struggled hard for the provision of welfare but has done so without any concrete appreciation of the need for specific class policies and administrative forms'[14].

The Left must go beyond simply opposing welfare cuts and mobilising a broad alliance to that end, so much is clear; it must also beware of the domination of bourgeois political and organisational forms, of the excessive reverence for parliamentary representative systems at central and local level which, coupled with bureaucratic management structures, has characterised the social democratic Welfare State. If the Left is to be revolutionary rather than reformist, new democratic structures and new welfare ideologies must be developed and struggled for.

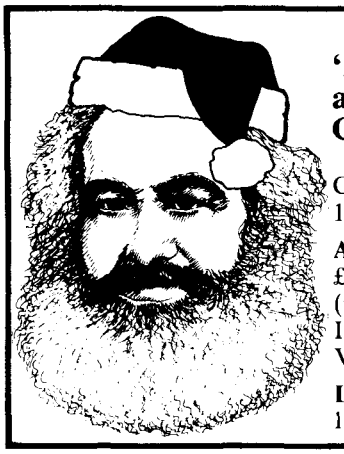
Issues for the Left

Let us indicate, then, some of the targets which the Left should be aiming for in developing working class struggle over Welfare State restructuring.

Clearly, the left should be immediately campaigning for a distinctively socialist programme of development involving substantial investment in a range of services. For example, the long history of under-financing in the national Health Service should be reversed, universal nursery and day care facilities provided, fundamental improvements to the school system undertaken and the private sector of education abolished. These and many other policies would push the contradictions in the Welfare State to a point where traditional, reformist social democratic politics could no longer hold. If, for example, all those entitled to social security benefits claimed their full rights, inadequte as they are, the system of social security would become unmanageable and collapse, its inherent contradictions becoming clearly evident.

But programmes which argue for *more* services, better staffed and financed, are not enough; we must attack the ideology and structure of the services themselves. We have acknowledged that the Welfare State is *not* benevolent and is increasingly not experienced as such by growing sections of the working class, especially by women, by the

[12]Müller and Neusüss, *op cit*.
[13]Holloway and Picciotto, *op cit* p13.
[14]P. Corrigan 'The Welfare State as an Arena of Class Struggle' *Marxism Today* March 1977. p93.



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unemployed, the young and the black population generally. This experience should be the material starting point of a confrontation, with the Right and with social democratic forces, over the oppressive idology embedded in the policies and organisation of the Welfare State. This ideology, and it will be reinforced by restructuring from the Right, rests upon the separation of individual and personal suffering from economic and political structures. Its material form, opposed to class analysis, can be seen in individualistic policies towards 'inadequate parents' in the field of child care, in the purely symptomatic drug treatment of depressed women, and in the various education, social service and punitive responses to juvenile delinquency, truancy and 'poor school performance'. All of these policies and practices rest upon an assumption that economic and political structures are irrelevant or marginal to the problems of poor parents, depressed women or delinquent and frustrated children. Marxism shows us that their 'problems' can only be appreciated as experienced within the social relations of the capitalist mode of production. This general understanding must be deepened and made more specific both among the recipients of the services and the Welfare State employees themselves. The growing militancy of Welfare State workers in response to restructuring and their increasing dissatisfaction with the ideology, policies and practices of the services in which they work should be a means by which ideological struggle is joined.

Here, the development of a Marxist psychology becomes crucial. We must understand how the individual experience of daily problems connects to welfare policy and practice and how bourgeois ideologies of male-female relations, of the family, of work, of old age and of death are reproduced in the personalities, attitudes and behaviour of both welfare consumers and Welfare State employees. We will then be able to explore more deeply the specific social and psychological mechanisms involved in these processes and thus develop a practice for teachers, social workers and others which at one level, will combat bourgeois ideas and policies more effectively.

But the ideological critique of social policy and welfare practice must involve also a sustained collective struggle against the organisational structures which maintain and propagate bourgeois welfare ideology as a material force. As restructuring from the Right proceeds, we can expect a further development of centralised bureaucratic control of Welfare State employees who might otherwise be reluctant to implement repressive policies or even directly oppose them. Being 'on the side of the ordinary people' against state bureaucrats, will hardly hinder the Right in attempting greater control of state employees who are suspected of progressive sympathies.

The Left should certainly, at this juncture, make alliances with those whose traditional liberal professionalism is under attack. It should struggle to retain professional semi-autonomy for teachers, social workers and others, but to go beyond the old bourgeois idea of professional identity and attempt to create a socialist conception of a critical, collective practice within the welfare field. Already, this attempt to create a new form of practice is beginning among social workers who reject individual pathology models of welfare clients and who are striving to apply a class analysis to the range of problems they meet and establish a collective group response to them.

An Offensive Perspective

Any effective struggle against restructuring, however, must move from the defensive to the offensive, to the building of working class hegemony in the welfare field. Of course, this offensive must be part of a wider economic and political struggle by a broad spectrum of progressive forces against a capitalist state moving steadily to the Right. In this wider struggle, battles about education, housing, social security, social services and health care should play a central strategic role.

To move beyond a social democratic stance of defending the Welfare State against expenditure cuts from the Right, the Left must focus on two further areas of work. Firstly, we must organise the struggle for new forms of democratic control within Welfare State structures. Initially, this is most likely to be effective at the local level; it involves working with patients of the NHS, with school pupils and students, with social service clients, with local authority housing tenants and with residents more generally who are affected by state planning decisions, the inadequacies of public services and the adverse consequences of local industry. Such work will require not only the demystification of social democratic and bourgeois political and organisational forms, but the building of new structures which can mobilise wider working class involvement in such struggles.

None of these activities are new to the Left; indeed the failures of community action and other local struggles in the past has led to a good deal of disillusionment amongst workers and activists in this area. However, it should become increasingly clear that with the entry of the radical Right into Welfare State restructuring and the breaking of the social democratic consensus, new contradictions will emerge which will provide an opportunity for a fresh engagement here: it is for the Left to make major contributions to its strategies, tactics and political analysis.

Finally, the Left must build an offensive based upon connecting and unifying welfare struggles with those of the workplace. The separation of the personal from the political in bourgeois society is paralleled by a similar separation of work from home, specifically of trade union struggle from local community action and battles over welfare. The example of NUPE in damanding policy changes over private practice in the National Health Service as part of its union strategy is a signal of the possibilities that lie ahead. The role of women is central here. For example, as the most oppressed section of welfare recipients, single parent mothers have frequently experienced the legendary male chauvinism of many trade union 'militants' as a major problem in their fight, with local authorities and social security, to secure better services for themselves. Women have played a leading part in community and welfare politics — its connection with trade union struggles should have a high priority for the Left. Each struggle can only be fully politicised by connection with the other; both struggles lose by their fragmentation.

SUMMARY

I have argued in this article that although fundamental contradictions between the needs of social reproduction and those of capital accumulation form the continuing basis for Welfare State restructuring, nevertheless the entry of the radical Right is a significant new phase. This new historical moment reflects a successful ideological offensive by the radical Right in securing the ground lost by social democratic politics and ideology. The working class has been deeply penetrated by this offensive, not least in the field of welfare where its experience of oppressive and alien welfare structures has appeared to authenticate right-wing ideas. The radical Right's welfare policies will, however, meet increasing contradictions of their own. It is upon these contradictions, and with the benefit of a deep critique of social democratic welfare ideologies, that renewed struggle must take place. This struggle must be aimed not only at opposing welfare cuts and demanding new resources and services, but at taking the offensive in confronting bureaucratic welfare structures and working to develop new forms of democratic control. Such a struggle must link together trade union battles with community politics in the long-term development of working class hegemony in the field of welfare. □

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How right-wing social democracy has undermined progressive consciousness, and why revolutionary politics are crucial.

Paul Corrigan

Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy

The Left and the Communist Party have carried out a series of important analyses of the background to the General Election of 1979. As a Parliamentary Candidate for the Communist Party I have seen it as necessary to carry out that exercise with a view to the way in which working class people think about politics. Thus this article may have been 'caused' by the election but it is about a wider issue, popular working class consciousness in 1979. For I think the election was one more piece of evidence for a significant shift of popular consciousness away from social democracy. Apart from minor hiccups, generations of working people had been politically brought up and educated within the boundaries of social democracy. I believe and I think most of us acted on the belief that the case for massive state involvement in both welfare and in the economy has been irrevocably won amongst the hearts and minds of most working people. Consequently we treated this as a sound ideological base to go forward to a real socialist consciousness.

I think we carried this out without a real analysis of the fragility of the ideological hold of social democracy on the working class. For, from where we viewed it on the left, social democracy did seem strong, it seemed to dominate peoples' lives. Yet we failed to see that from the right social democracy looked far less strong since it was wide open to direct attacks based securely on the *social relationships that people were already experiencing*. What do I mean by this? Firstly, that working class people may experience the importance of collectivity, but they also experience the individualised experience of the market every single day. Thus whilst they may believe in collectivity, they also *have* to believe in capitalist social relations. Thatcher's major argument around incentives is one that is backed up and given validity in the lives of nearly every working person nearly every day. Thus, there was a firm base for Thatcher to undermine social democracy. A base which not only includes the capitalist dominance of the media but also includes the day to day experiences of working people.

This article will explore the reasons why social democracy has been undermined for millions of working people and then pose what I see as the necessary response to this. The three major reasons I will cover are, firstly the nature of social democratic state policy developed since the war; secondly the nature of social democratic political experience and thirdly the continued power of day to day capitalist social relationships as a direct political force.

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC STATE POLICY

Sadly, many of the Tory votes were votes *against* the welfare state, against nationalisation and against the trade union movement. Thatcher made this clear in nearly every speech in the election and as Stuart Hall indicated in his far-sighted 'Great Moving Right Show' *Marxism Today* article in January 1979, she was doing this as a reflection of an existing ideological shift.

The social democratic welfare state

Peter Leonard discusses the politics of welfare policy in this current issue. Here I would like to underline the repercussions in working peoples' experience of social democratic policies. I have written before in *Marxism Today* of the fact that the left has failed to give sufficient thought to the structure of welfare state services. By this I mean that on various occasions the working class waged enormous struggles which usually had an electoral component and which were directly aimed at the extension of the welfare state. Even if only by voting, millions of people have been involved in the struggle for pensions, the NHS and for comprehensives.

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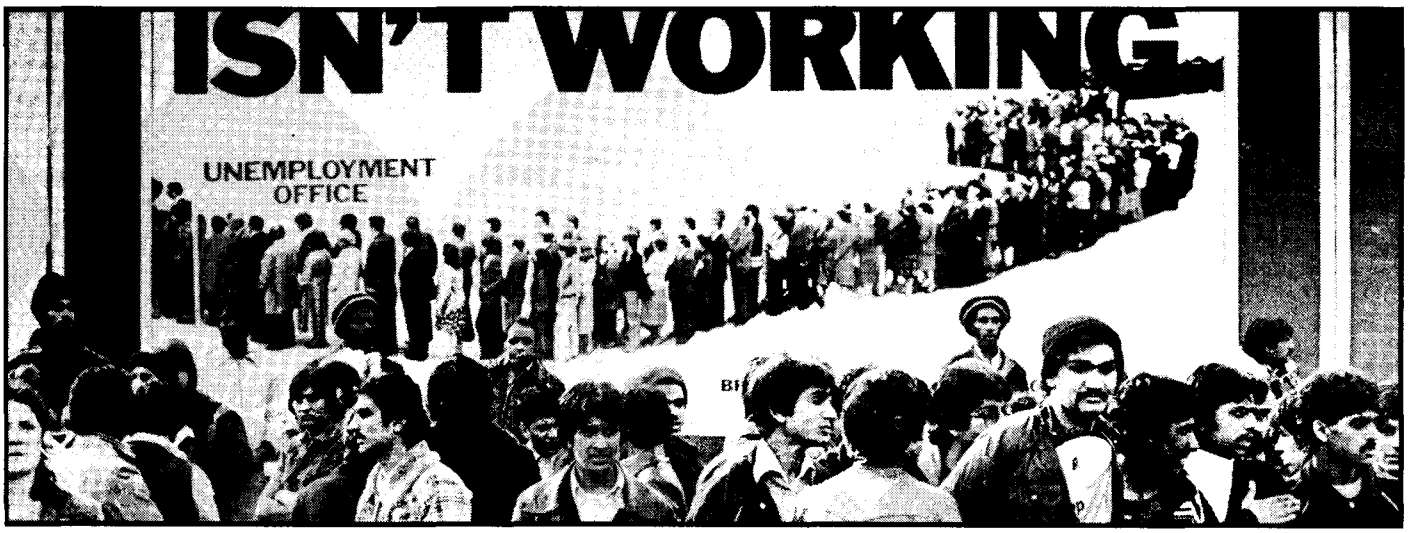

photo: John Sturrock (Report)

After most of these victories had been won, their actual implementation was left to state officials. The structures of service that were created by this social democratic process were ones that almost uniformly treated working people as recipients of the policy and the only democratic relationship that they had with the service was that of client or customer.

What was the end result of this process? Firstly, to some very real extent each of these changes represented real material advances for the working class. But they are actually *experienced* as state policy in a way which contradicts the expected end result. Comprehensives have not ended selection since that selection occurs within the examination system; the NHS has not provided an open experience of a good health service; council housing is not widely experienced as a democratic housing form etc. The fact that reformism could not come up with the goods in a capitalist society was continually pointed out by the Communist Party, but we didn't fully realise what thirty years of this would mean for working people. It has led many of them not to say let us go on beyond reformism, but let us go back. Why?

The main reason is the way in which social democracy has created a purely client relationship between the mass of people and welfare services. Thus on those occasions when the level of services has been adequate, the working class usually experience it as recipients with no chance of any democratic say in running the service. This has come to light very strongly in many of the cuts campaigns. It has proved possible to mobilise some people around the cuts in the actual level of services. Yet by and large slogans like 'Save Our Schools' have proved of extremely limited uses since most welfare institutions are not experienced as 'ours'. The experience of being a client, a passive recipient, must be seen as very different from an experience of some democratic control over the service.

This is not to say that the advances in state provision have not been important and have not been actually experienced as advances. But the day to day gruelling experiences of dealing with a bureaucratic state form of services has provided a direct challenge to social services being a 'good thing'.

It would be easier if this were not so but the great mass of working people have experienced education, supplementary benefit, the NHS, council housing etc, as something external and bureaucratic. Over thirty years this has turned significant sections of the population away from the welfare state as a progressive set of institutions. When Thatcher raved against state bureaucracy and in favour of the individual she did so on the fertile ground of thirty years of experience of such statism.

This has direct relevance to the struggle against the welfare cuts. Firstly we must not expect that people will automatically want to defend these services since their experience has been on some occasions so humiliating. Secondly and here the Communist Party leads the way with its political strategy, we must ensure that we inject as much democracy into welfare services as we do in the mass campaigns against these cuts. In fighting to defend and extend the welfare state, we must struggle, vitally, to extend the democratic relationships within all those services.

Nationalisation

In the election campaign, in Coventry, we faced the difficult question of what to say to those Talbot/Chrysler workers who seemed to be facing imminent shutdown. Any policy that we put forward for voters in Coventry *had* to contain a large measure of public ownership; capital has so severely stripped the city bare that it is necessary to inject billions for investment. Yet in constructing this policy we had to come to terms with the experience that working people have of nationalisation.

Again millions of workers have struggled politically and electorally for decades for nationalisation. The adherence of the Labour Party and many major trade unions to the policy of nationalising the commanding heights of industry has been vitally important. Indeed every majority Labour government has introduced a measure of nationalisation.

However, in terms of job security, calling for nationalisation directly contradicts many of the experiences that workers have had. Nationalised industries have produced hundreds of thousands of redundancies. Many of the Chrysler/Talbot workers had worked on the railways, in the mines and to suggest nationalisation as a method of *saving* jobs contradicted their background. Equally, everyone has experienced nationalised industries as bureaucratic machines. All those jokes about waiting for gas bills and trains are unfortunately based upon real experiences of inadequate services.

Again, like the welfare state, such inadequacy of provision would not by itself be so politically crippling if working people had a direct say in the running of services. But social democracy has created passive clients and workers by the *form* of nationalisation involved. I am not saying that nationalised industries are the same as private industry, the capital labour relationship is very different. But it is true that the working class have not experienced those nationalised industries as being run by them either as workers, customers or voters.

It is vital that the left combat this bureaucratic state form of nationalisation. Again the Communist Party discussed such democratic alternatives at its 35th Congress. Mike Le Cornu and others have raised the issue in *Marxism Today* this year (July 1979) and

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it is essential that such democratic rethinking is carried on apace. The whole left has to re-establish nationalisation as a major plank for any working class advance. The only way in which this plank can be built within popular working class culture is to provide people with a genuine, democratic, richer experience of nationalisation.

Trade Unions

Not only was there a distinct vote against the welfare state and the experience of nationalisation, there was also a vote against the trade union movement. I am not talking here of the few pathetic Tory trades unionists who are dragged out at every Tory Party conference, rather the millions of members who do seem to agree with the notion that 'trade unions have too much power'.

The trade union movement is significantly different from the social democratic welfare state or nationalised industries since there is a direct democratic machinery which governs its decision-making. This means that popular consciousness experiences trade unions as directly contradictory. They can agree with the view that trade unions have too much power, but also see themselves as a part of an organisation which has *insufficient* power against *their own* employer.

As revolutionary socialists within the grade union movement it is one of our tasks to ensure that there is a mass involvement in decision-making and in struggles. In constructing democratic organisations such as the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, the Communist Party has been in the forefront of democratic mass trade union struggle. But we must still admit that despite our efforts there are elements within the movement which are anti-democratic; that provide direct material experiences for Thatcherism to build its anti-trade union message around. The social democratic dominance of the structure of the trades union movement needs to be challenged to ensure the fullest possible democratic involvement.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND PARTIES

The decision made by the Communist Party to become a mass Party underlined at the 35th Congress stresses the vitally important difference between our party and other political organisations within the Labour Movement. For a mass party is not simply a question of numbers, it also expresses a very different political structure; a different relationship between membership and leadership and a different relationship between Party and class than any other form of Party. Much of this discussion usually takes place around the diffference between a mass party and a vanguard party; here I want to underline the difference between mass party and social democratic party.

These differences are important if we are to play our essential role in the rejuvenation of socialist political consciousness. It is essential for us to outline the difference in form and experience between ourselves and the Labour Party. The basic electoralism of the Labour Party

When Thatcher raved against state bureaucracy and in favour of the individual she did so on the fertile ground of thirty years of experience of such statism.

detracts forom mass politics for two reasons. Firstly, the only time that the actual membership is needed is when an election takes place. Once a year in municipal elections and once every few years for Parliament, the Labour Party appeals to its membership to come to the aid of the Party. In between times there are socials and if you are in an exceptional area, a few educationals. The only other role for a left activist is to try and change the Party policy at the level of the NEC. Contained in this activity is a continual looking upwards for political effect. This has it is true shifted the Labour Party NEC to the left, but it continues to treat the working class mainly as voters to be affected by policy offered by the NEC, rather than the Labour Party activist having any direct and continuing relationship with the working class. For social democratic politics then, power is not seen to reside in the mass of people who live in a city or work in industry, but in a leadership who provide a policy that only reaches the working class when they are asked to vote for it as political consumers.

The only way in which this plank can be built within popular working class culture is to provide people with a genuine, democratic, richer experience of nationalisation.

The Difference Between Revolutionary and Social Democratic Politics

This issue must characterise the difference between a mass revolutionary party as a political organisation and a social democratic party. The former must have a continual dialectical relationship with the masses, learning from them and moving them. Activists must be involved in a wide range of political, social and cultural movements as a concrete part of their political practice. A social democratic party treats the working class as consumers of ideas and policies. Turning them into clients of political movements as effectively as the state organisations we have already discussed turn them into passive clients. In contrast the Communist Party needs to develop those strong structures which involve and learn from the working class and treat that class as capable of teaching the Party.

The hierarchical relationships within a social democratic party always put those people who have been successful in the electoral race above the party itself. The 1979 Labour Party Conference marks the first small step in moving away from this elitism; it moves away from the view that the Labour Party is simply about getting votes out in elections and it moves away from the view that the most important people in the party are the leadership.

However, that social democratic experience of what politics is about has been strongly felt by generations of working people. It has left the great mass of the working class feeling that politics is a game played by old men; something that involves leaders, the telly and smoke filled rooms. This has seriously weakened left political culture amongst the working people of Britain. The view of political parties that is held up to working people is one that does not include active political involvement, even of the membership, let alone of the rest of the class. I think that this has fuelled people's cynicism about politics and has provided a boost to one of the most significant political trends at the moment within the working class; that of anti-partyism.

If social democratic politics then is about gaining electoral positions while downgrading active day to day struggle, it is inevitable that thirty years of social democratic success will succeed in turning people off politics as an activity. It is therefore essential that the Communist party strengthens its relationshp with the working class by underlining its differences as a political party with the Labour Party. This is *not* a call for sectarianism; I am not discussing differences in the matter of *policy*, rather I am underlining that we must offer a political experience in the form and nature of our Party which is distinctly different from that of social democracy. It must actively involve the membership and the membership's relationship with working people's activities; it must mean that we and our comrades outside

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the Party are involved as a major aspect of politics in the whole of working class life. It means we must put at the very top of the revolutionary agenda the way in which we carry out democracy both inside the Party and in the Party's relationship with mass movements; it means we must make sure that all the structures we work in and organise have as much democracy, participation and involvement as possible. We must demonstrate the fact that our view of politics can *only* work if it involves masses of people, not just in following, but in leading struggles.

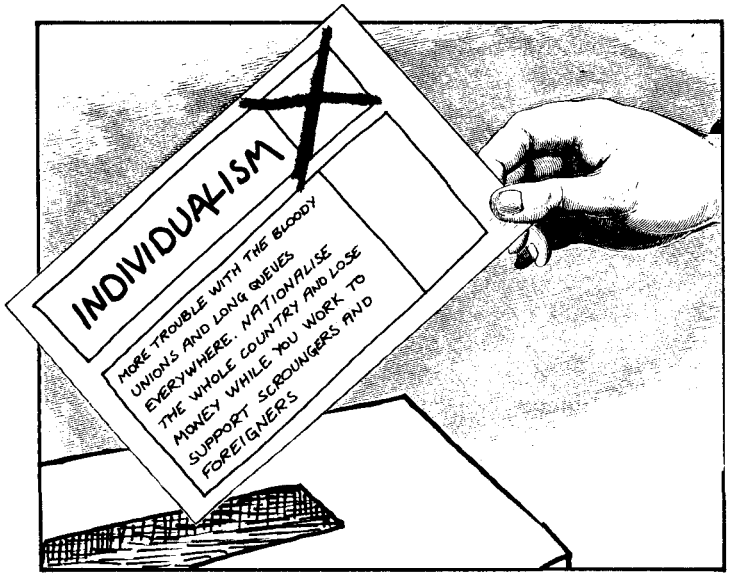
The Social Relations of Capitalism

The two aspects of social democratic contradictions that I have outlined above have undermined the hold of social democracy on working people's ideas. It must be remembered that this is only one of the factors that has made social democracy so vulnerable. Capitalist social relationships themselves continue to exist within our society in people's everyday experience, consequently they provide a very strong basis for the shift to the right.

Since 1939 social democracy has held out the importance of collectivism against individualism within our society. This was at a high tide during the war itself, when it was powerfully backed up by a stronger than ever socialist movement. Yet the collectivity that the social democrats have held out to the people has never been strong enough to take on the citadels of individualism.

Let me explain what this means to working people. In 1945 the Labour government proposed to people the ending of all of the worst ills of a capitalist society by legislating for the collective responsibility of the whole society for the sick and the poor. They enacted legislation to carry this out but in nearly every single case they included in this collective legislation crucial aspects of capitalist individualism. Thus the social security system that we were meant to be so proud of is still based on the individual claimant and the means test. Equally when the collectivism of the Labour Party came up against the institutions of capitalism in set piece battles the Labour governments always backed down. Thus in 1948 Marshall Aid was given only on the understanding that there would be cuts in public expenditure; in 1966 the 'gnomes' gave their loans on a similar basis; in 1975 the IMF also insisted on cuts. On every occasion the Labour government caved in.

What lessons can people learn from this? I would suggest that working people saw the institutions based upon profit, incentive and individualism winning over those institutions and sentiments of collectivism. This has provided fertile ground for a Thatcherism which can appeal to self-interest and incentive; which can pose


INDIVIDUALISM
MORE TROUBLE WITH THE BLOODY UNIONS AND LONG QUEUES EVERYWHERE. NATIONALISE THE WHOLE COUNTRY AND LOSE MONEY WHILE YOU WORK TO SUPPORT SCROUNGERS AND FOREIGNERS

collective institutions as all very well but when it comes to the crunch they are not strong enough; or rather they are not strong enough when it is posed and carried out in a social democratic way by a social democratic government.

Building Collective Consciousness

The power of individualism though is not only found in its triumphs in these set pieces but also in people's day to day experiences in a capitalist society. I think we greatly underestimate the strength of these day to day experiences of shopping, taking an exam, paying the rent/mortgage etc, in teaching people individualism. We *must* recognise that there is a daily barrage of these feelings that constantly undermine collective actions.

What does this mean? It is important *not* to see the way in which working people think as being entirely constructed within an external ideology. 'Right wing ideology' is not purely something constructed by the media or the Tories or monopoly capital. We need to see that there are very good reasons why working people within capitalism think in an individualistic way. It makes sense of much of what happens to them.

This is what I take Gramsci to mean by hegemony, not simply the ideas that people have but how these are reinforced by their day to day experiences of life. Consequently when we construct aspects of people's lives that express collectivism and solidarity these take place in a world that still stresses individualism. The former is struggled for in order to construct as broad a basis as possible for these collective experiences. The Italian Communist Party since the war has attempted to build up a broad range of social, cultural and political experiences which can shield the working class from the full pressure of capitalist individualism. Under these circumstances it is possible continually to see collectivism develop into a truly socialist consciousness. But social democracy, because it saw political and state policy as essentially *sponsored*, from above, rather than participating from below, has not provided the depth and the breadth of these experiences. This in the end left it vulnerable to Thatcher's militant individualism.

CONCLUSIONS

This article started by trying to chart what has been a real shift away from social democracy to the right. I have tried to show the way in which that shift is caused partly by the internal contradictions of social democratic state policy and partly by the way in which social democratic parties have managed to turn people away from political involvement. I then also went on to discuss the role of individualism in undermining collective politics on a day to day basis.

Lest the article be seen as pessimistic, I should end on what I see as a crucial opportunity for the Left and the Communist Party in this moment. The Communist Party has committed itself to the struggle for democracy not simply in an abstract sense but in a positive day to day struggle against the right in society. We also propose a style and form of politics which is *based* upon the involvement of the masses in struggle and progress. At no stage do we take up the slogan of 'leave it up to the leadership and everything will be all right'. At no stage do we follow the road laid down by Callaghan and others that sees experts and leaders running either struggle or the state.

As a political movement we now have an opportunity to rejuvenate popular consciousness not on the statist lines of social democracy but on lines that meet the important efforts of ordinary working people to struggle for direct democratic involvement in their own lives. It is this form of consciousness and struggle that will provide a secure and solid base for a shift towards a truly socialist consciousness and society. □

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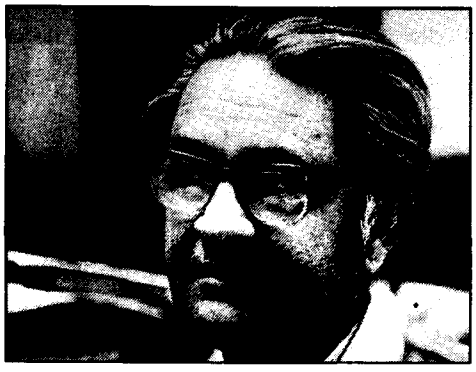
From militant in India to militant in Britain



Interview with Vishnu Sharma

Interviewed by Dave Cook

Can you describe your family background, the earliest political influences on your life, and your first contacts with the progressive movement in India?

I was born in a village called Khatkar Kalan in the Punjab. My village became famous because it was the home of a great national hero of the Liberation movement Bhagat Singh who was hanged by the British Raj at the age of 23, for his political activity. This was 1931 and I was only 10.

My mother, who was a completely non-political woman, took me to Lahore, where his execution took place. I was much influenced by Bhagat Singh's martyrdom, which shook the whole country, but particularly the area where I lived.

We were a poor family. My father was a clerk to a firm of contractors. He was a very honest, hard-working man. He was able to pay my fees in the school. Most of the people in the village were poor, landless workers. Only three or four people in our village were rich.

I came into contact with a reformist movement influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and in particular one of his disciples, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who later became a Minister of Health. This woman's approach was to lay emphasis on such things as keeping the streets clean. Also on evening classes to teach the Punjabi language. The campaign against illiteracy was a never-ending battle.

I became secretary of the Congress movement in my village. There were people, whom we called 'toadies' of the British Raj, who couldn't tolerate my activities, and at the age of 15, I was arrested, and imprisoned for 3 months.

In the next village lived a well known communist called Harbans Singh Karnana. He had travelled to New Zealand and Canada, and had come into contact with revolutionary politics there. He also had been arrested, and was now restricted to the limits of his village, all the time under police surveillance.

Suddenly, one dark evening, he appeared in my village with two friends, having given 'his' policeman the slip. He introduced himself, and admired our work. He said that although it was good that the streets were cleaned, it was necessary to face up to the question of who was responsible for the poverty. He spoke of the Soviet Union, and how illiteracy and poverty were being tackled there.

Harbans Singh was the first to introduce me to Socialism. At that time (the late 30s), there was a broad based movement in the Punjab called the Kirti Party. Harbans Singh was a member. Their weekly paper, published illegally, in Punjabi and Urdu, contained much about 'imperialism' and the 'proletariat' which I didn't understand.

But sometimes fiery revolutionary poems were published, and I used to recite them at public meetings.

The migration of Punjabi peasants had been going on since 1900. From countries like Malaya, Canada, Argentina, came back money and political influences, and also experiences of discrimination. The Congress movement was very strong in the Punjab and I became involved in the organisation of peasant associations. I remember one campaign in Jullundur when 50,000 peasants marched to demand the construction of irrigation canals.

I left school in 1937, and began to work full time for the Kisan Sabha (Peasants' Association) and for the Kirti Party. In 1939 we plunged into anti-war activities. To dodge the police we would arrive unannounced in a village, give anti-war speeches, opposing recruitment and donations to the 'defence of India Fund' launched by the Government. Warrants were issued for our arrest but I successfully evaded them for two and a half years.

The Kirti Party sent me to Amritsar to work among textile workers. The President and Secretary of the Textile Workers' Union had been arrested and the workers were leaderless. I changed my name, and worked as a barber, as a cover, occasionally even cutting some hair. Here I got my first lesson in trade unionism. I remember being particularly influenced by Emile Burns' book *Introducton to Marxism* which had been translated into Punjabi.

In May 1942, I returned to my village for my younger sister's wedding. The police raided seven houses and caught me in one. No charge was made but I was kept in prison for 8 months under the 'Defence of India' rules.

For 8 months I just read — all the time. Sometimes people have asked me where I graduated. Jullundur prison university is my reply.

On release, like Harbans Singh, I was 'interned' in my village. With no land, no shop, no capital, and no means of livelihood, I petitioned the Governor of the Punjab to be allowed to move to a place where I could work. I was transferred to Ludhiana, an industrial centre partricularly known for hosiery manufacture. I got a job in a factory and learnt knitting. A very bored C.I.D. man was deputed to watch over me all the time, and I soon came to an agreement with him whereby neither of us would report each other for our misdeeds!

In 1942 the Kirti Party, after prolonged negotiation with the C.P.I., dissolved itself, and offered all its resources to the Party. The ban was lifted on the C.P.I. and I became active in its Ludhiana City leadership.

Then I moved to Jullundur and was involved in a number of trade unions — iron and steel workers, railway workers, road sweepers. We formed a sort of District TUC and I became General Secretary of that.

Whenever a wage claim was made, it seemed I was arrested, because the authorities regarded me as the ring-leader. In all I spent 3½ years behind bars.

After India achieved independence in 1947, even Nehru's Government was persecuting Communists. They were raided for arrests in 1948. I escaped my arrest and started working underground. I grew my hair and a beard, and became a 'Sikh' — using several

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aliases. Only in 1952 when the government withdrew warrants of arrest did I become clean-shaven again. My main work during the underground period was among textile workers and government employees in Delhi. I became Assistant Secretary of the Punjab Provincial TUC.

Why did you decide to leave India?

The main reason was financial. In India it is terrible to be the eldest in the family. When my father retired, my father's family responsibility fell on to my shoulders as the eldest. I did not get married in case I was unable to arrange finance for the weddings of my brother and sisters. I fell heavily into debt. So I came to Britain in February 1957 and immediately made contact with the Communist Party in West Middlesex.

Why did immigration from the Punjab centre in the Southall area of West London?

On the border with Hayes was a rubber factory, R. Woolfe by name. Their personnel manager, Mr. Dunn, had served in India with the police, and while in the Punjab had learned that the people there were honest and hard-working.

In those days what Punjabi people there were lived in the Aldgate area in the East End. There was no Punjabi living in Southall. He began to recruit from Aldgate. Naturally, after crossing London each day, the workers began to buy and rent houses in Southall.

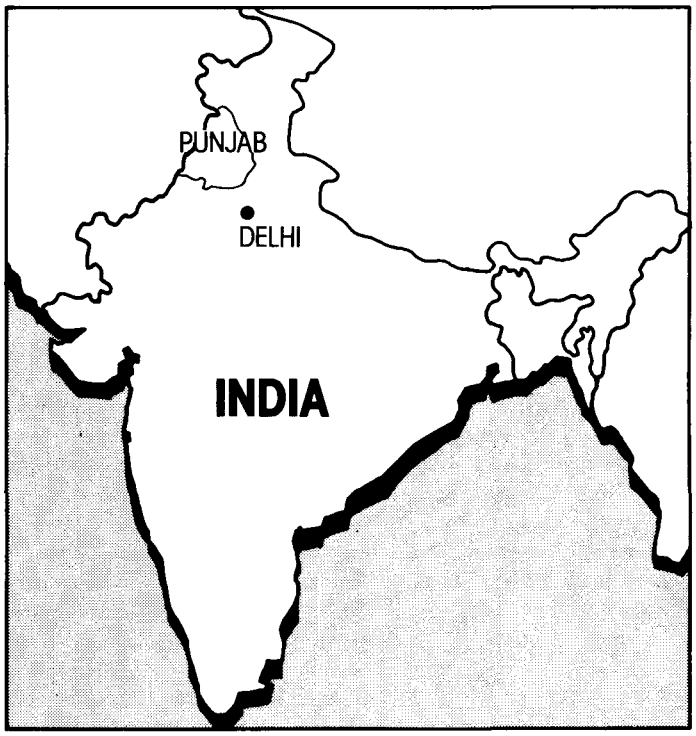
In 1957 when I came, you saw only a handful of turbans. I think the total of Indians in the area was around 1,000, mainly men. Very few families had joined them. Gradually employment spread to other factories, particularly in the bakeries. In all of them there was a high turnover of labour. The Punjabi immigrants solved this problem for the employers.

Only slowly were skilled and white collar jobs broken into. Very few Indians worked at Heathrow in 1957. I personally knew the first Asian in Southall to begin work as a bus conductor, the first to become a driver, to work in the post office, and, later, in a bank.

Can you describe the establishment of the Southall Indian Workers' Association (IWA)?

The first inaugural meeting was on March 3, 1957, which I attended. The initiative was taken by Messrs A. S. Rai, H. S. Ruprah, Takhar and Rattan Singh. They were progressives and some of them were socialists. A year later I was elected on to the Executive Committee and ever since have been heavily involved in the Association, being elected General Secretary in 1961-62 and 1966-68. And at the time of this interview I am President.

I got a job in Woolfe's rubber factory. The working conditions were appalling. Gwylym Evans of the TGWU, who was an active trade unionist and communist, told me of many attempts to organise a union there, all unsuccessful. My experiences organising unions while operating underground were to stand me in good stead! On May 1st,



the IWA held its first public meeting celebrating May Day. From the platform I spoke about the conditions in the factory and the need to form a union. Later that evening I was sacked when I turned up for the night shift. The foreman said I spent too much time in the toilets. I remember telling him that one day he would be forced to negotiate round a table with the representatives of the union. From outside the factory, myself, and others inside, very quietly and secretively enrolled about 400 members into the TGWU — more than half the Indians working there. The Union brought pressure to bear from outside, and the management gave in. Later I had the satisfaction of seeing my foreman again and rubbing in our victory.

The relative stability of the Southall IWA over a long period is striking. Why do you think the Indian Community in Britain has been able to develop such powerful organisations?

As I told you, the Southall IWA was established by politically conscious and progressive people. From the start they were very aware of the fact that now we were living in Britain, whether we were from the peasantry, landless workers or the middle class in India, here we were workers, and this was capitalism. The IWA encouraged all its members to join their respective trade unions and become actively involved. We were clear that it had to be broad-based, and not the property of any one political party, even though some of the active members were and are communists and other left wingers.

To what extent did divisions originating in India hamper this unity, for example castes?

Well, there is no doubt about the strength of caste divisions in India, about the nasty business of 'untouchability'. In fact I belong to a so-called high caste Brahmin family. There are a large number of what

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in India would be called 'untouchables' living in Southall, and also Jats, who, in Punjab, are mostly the land owning class. The people who are described as 'untouchables' in India are a landless working class and I hate to call them untouchables. Most of them are the desciples of Guru Ravidass, and are to be called Ravidissis hereafter.

But always in my election results for IWA office, I have received big support from all sections, especially the Ravidissis and Balmikis. Also, there are between 25,000 and 30,000 Indians in Southall, most of them Sikhs. I am neither a Sikh nor do I consider myself a Hindu.

My experience is that if you work hard, give service and take a principled political stand, these barriers are finished. When I stood for the Presidentship of the IWA in 1977 elections there were 6 leaflets of different sorts issued against me, accusing me of being against this and that religion or caste, and in support of others. They made no impact.

But to get back to why the IWA is strong. I have said that Indian workers learned their ABC of British Trade Unionism. We have made very close links with the main unions in the area and in at least 8 firms our members have built organisation where there was none. This class conscious attitude is helped by the fact that the Punjab is advanced politically with a strong communist and progressive movement.

While many Indian workers did not have industrial skills when they came here, there was also a large artisan class of carpenters and bricklayers who were easily absorbed into construction. In engineering and the airport, most worked on 'unskilled' jobs, but now some have become skilled operatives. You will find many shop stewards and branch officials among Indian workers for example in the catering sections of British Airways and in some bakeries.

I would now like to switch to the connection that may exist between divisions among the left in India and among the IWAs here. Has there ever been one united IWA?

No. Right from the start, IWAs were set up locally, obviously in London, in Southall, also Coventry and a few other places. In late 1958 or early 1959, the IWA (GB) was formed. Southall IWA attended its first meeting, but was clearly much broader than what was being planned. The majority of the executive voted not to affiliate, believing the IWA (GB) was seen as a narrower left and communist organisation.

This was the basic difference. Southall IWA believed a mass organisation should not be a front for any single political group, but should be capable of drawing to it all sorts of political elements within the community.

Now Southall IWA has grown to 15,000 members, with big premises and full time officers.

Vishnu, can you say something about the way Southall IWA has been able to build up such mass influence. For example with what issues has it been predominantly concerned?

Southall IWA became a broad-based organisation because at every turning point of racist politics, for example changes in immigration law, it was able to give a lead to the Community. It consistently has given practical assistance on the various issues, for example on passports, immigration problems, appeals before industrial Tribunals, income tax, problems concerning children, and against the policy of 'bussing' to school. Because it has been involved in all these things, it has a very big appeal.

Also the IWA has given support to all industrial disputes in the area when Asian workers have been involved.

But to get back to the divisions. In 1964 there was a split in the CPI on the question of China. The CPI (Marxist) was established. I shall refer to it as the CPI(M). Here in Britain all Indian communists were at this time members of the CPGB, and I am proud to say playing an important part in IWAs in many cities. This included communists who later supported the CPI(M).

However, in 1965 all this changed. Following a visit by Harkishan Singh Surjit, who is now, a politbureau member of the CPI(M), supporters of that party resigned from the CPGB. We are speaking of between 30 and 40 people. They formed the Association of Indian Communists, and exerted a big influence on the IWA(GB). In 1968 there was a further split in India, this time in the CPI(M) on the question of an incident in a village in West Bengal called Naxalbari. This was paralleled here by the formation of a second Association of Indian Communists, and later, the establishment of a second IWA(GB). The result being 2 IWA(GB)s functioning with the same name nationally.

What is the relative size of the various IWAs?

Well in Southall, as you know, we have 15,000 members, and we are not affiliated to anybody. We bought the largest cinema in town in 1967, the Dominion, for £75,000. All that money was raised by the community.

Both the IWA(GB)s say they have branches in over 20 towns, with membership around 20,000.

Southall IWA has resisted suggestions to organise branches in other towns. We are a local organisation in the West of London. There are some other local IWAs like Huddersfield who are, like us, also independent.

Have there been attempts to overcome the divisions you have spoken of, and try and set up a single national organisation?

No. The political differences have seemed so great, despite the attacks to which the immigrant community have been subject. But I am very glad to say that the 3 IWAs have united around the Tory threat to intensify the racism in immigration procedures, and taken an important joint initiative in setting up the 'Campaign against Racist Laws'. I hope that by working together shoulder to shoulder, confidence will be restored. Perhaps this will lead us at a certain stage to form one IWA covering the whole of Great Britain.

Can you describe the part Indian Communists have played within the West Middlesex Communist Party over the years?

Originally there were separate branches for Indians. This was changed in 1964 when the Party decided that it was incorrect to have branches based on nationality, although Indian members can and do meet separately to discuss specific questions relating to the community.

Indian communists are active in branches in Southall and Hounslow, and in the past in the workplace branch at the airport. Although the Party has never been great in numbers, I think it is correct to say that we have considerable influence in Southall, and of course, our members have been active members like Gurnam Powar, Randhawa, Joginder, Kapila, of the IWA from the beginning.

Can you say something about the position of women in the Southall community?

Yes. We must understand that India is on the path of capitalist development. This means that although feudalism has been broken there is still a very large grip held by landlords and rich peasantry in the countryside. The cultural pattern in the village is still affected by the legacy of feudalism, so there is still much feudal thinking in the

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social and cultural spheres.

There is no doubt about it that in India women have to travel a very long way to get equal rights with men. In India many women could not even sit at the same dining table as their brother-in-law.

In Southall I am happy to see that they have discarded all these sorts of things. Many women are wearing what are for them foreign costumes. In most houses there are no obvious signs of discrimination on caste grounds. I mean, people of different castes live together, use the same kitchens and crockery. That is a great advance. For people who have not seen Asian countries, it is damned difficult for them to understand the full impact of British life.

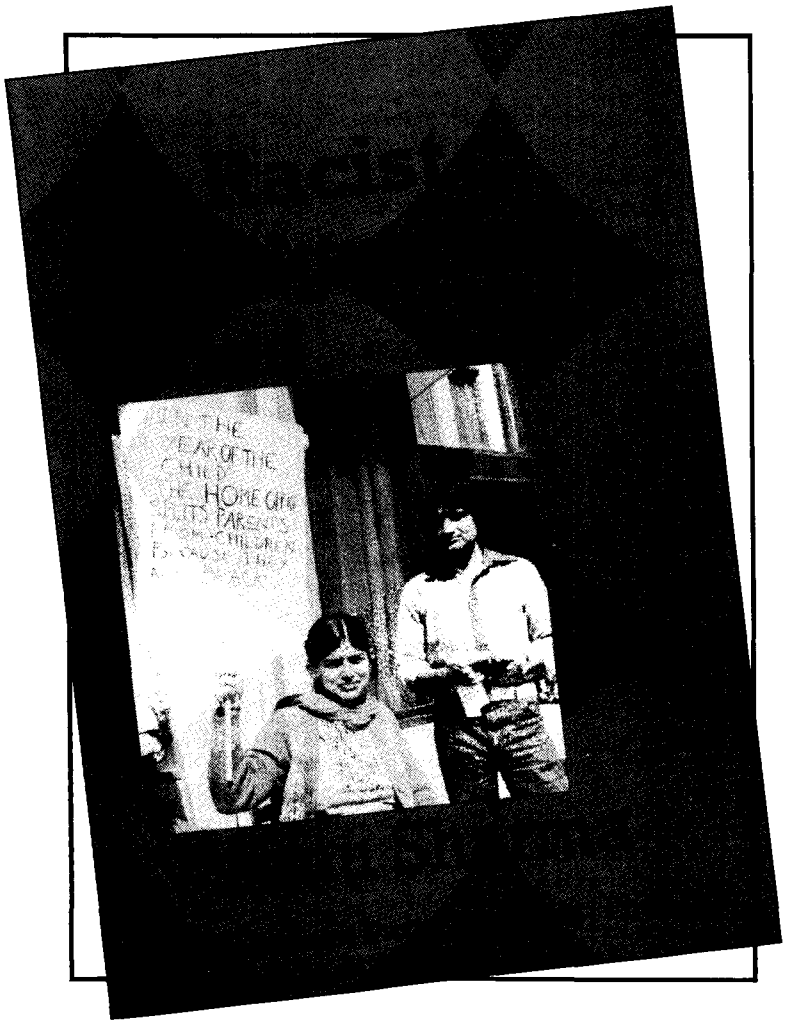
Women are increasingly going out to work and becoming involved in the trade union movement. There is a strike going on in Derby now involving many Indian women as well as in Slough involving a hundred women. Some, like Mrs Desai at Grunwick's, have been at the forefront of the workers' struggle. Indian women are begining to realise their class position as well as their sex position.

The agitation which compelled the Labour government in 1974 to allow male fiancées and husbands to join women who are settled here, was important in this.

Let me ask a specific question on this. How many women are there on the Executive of Southall IWA?

None. I must confess this is one of our great weaknesses, although women are a large proportion of our members.

Do women play an active part in the Association? For example, do they speak at General Meetings?



Again, no. Unfortunately our general meetings are very noisy. To be honest, the women become fed up when they see mature men attacking each other mercilessly. They consider what is going on to be a sort of fight. Very few come to meetings and I think their presence sometimes helps us to discipline the members present. We have had a number of women's advisories, and women's committees, which try to organise activities for women members. But this is a great weakness.

To an increasing number of Indian people the term 'immigrant' does not apply, because they were born here. To what extent are the youth growing up separately from family and community traditions?

Well nearly half of the Indian population of Southall was born here, although the colour of their skin is brown or black. In every sense they are British citizens, many of them patrials with every legal right. Only lunatics like Enoch Powell and the NF say they are not.

But the family pattern of Asian people is very strong. Particularly when the parents are not very politically or socially conscious of the new environment in which they live, they can have a very orthodox, in some ways feudal, attitude towards their children, who naturally become disgusted because of that. The children grow up with the British children in the schools. On top of this, the mass media, particularly televison, has a great impact.

Many children are a mixture of two cultures, and respect both Indian and British culture, learning from both. My own daughter is now 16. She was born here and speaks both excellent Punjabi and excellent English. She has passed 8 'O' levels and is doing her 'A' levels. On her record player you will hear English as well as Indian records. She enjoys seeing Indian films and English ones. At the Dominion you can see a mixture of both.

Of course there are lots of problems in this mixture. Some families are geting extraordinarily anglicised. They speak English with their children all the time. A grandmother, who cannot speak English, gives instructions in Punjabi. Because most of the children understand Punjabi, but cannot speak it, they reply in English. In some families, India for the children is a foreign land.

There is a great conflict, a cultural conflict in some families. The children have revolted against their parents, especially over the caste system. Certainly there is no harm if the youth organise themselves in separate organisations and fight for their rights. They have to learn that capitalism cannot solve their problems. The more they discuss them, and the more they ask for help from other organisations, the better.

In Southall in particular, and in the Indian community in general, there has been a strong tradition of support for the Labour Party. Can you speak about this? For example, on what is it based, and do you see it continuing?

Well, Indians, like all voters, are much affected by the strength and size of the Labour and Conservative Parties. My generation remember well the attitude of Conservative leaders like Churchill to Indian independence. Many see the Conservatives as the party of big capital, and not the ordinary people. Their political instincts lie towards the Labour party, even though there has been much racist legislation from Labour governments. As far as elections are concerned the majority of Indians in Southall vote Labour. Out of 28 Labour councillors on Ealing Borough Council, 14 are elected from Southall and among these are four Asians.

Of course many people see little difference between Conservative and Labour as far as immigration law is concerned. They see Labour placing emphasis on numbers, and implementing Tory laws. So there is a lot of potential support for parties other than the big two.

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Can you describe your experiences as a Communist council candidate?

In the Northcote ward, where I live, my vote in 1971 was about 500. Three years later it went up to 1553, and I was 23 short of defeating the Labour councillor who had held the seat for 24 years and been a mayor of Southall in the past.

The biggest blunder in my political life was to miss handing in my nomination forms at the last election, because I couldn't give personal attention to the details. Many of my personal votes went to elect Councillor Gupta, an independent councillor.

I am fully confident that if we can form a broad electoral alliance with other democratic forces in Southall, we could win seats, probably with Communists among them.

Now I'd like to move on to the impact on the Southall community of the events of April 23, 1979 — the death of Blair Peach, and the arrest of over 700 people demonstrating against the National Front, in what has been widely described as a 'police riot'.

photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

Well, to understand what happened this year, you have to go back to June 1976, when Gurdip Chaggar was killed. In response to his death the whole Indian community in Southall, irrespective of internal differences (and we have lots of those), stood as one man. The IWA leadership, and the Communist Party, intervened to argue that anger and fury should not be directed against white people, because all whites are not racist. Among a lot of young people who were not politically conscious the first thought was revenge in 1976.

So when the NF was allowed to organise their meeting on April 23 in Southall Town Hall, many remembered these events. They also remembered the comment made by Kingsley Read at Gurdip Chaggar's death, 'one down, a million to go'. They also remembered that Judge McKinnon patted Read on the back and let him go when he was prosecuted under the Race Relations Act for this.

So there was enormous anger. The IWA took the intiative to call together all Southall organisations to a meeting on April 11 in the Dominion Cinema. From this a coordinating committee was set up which organised a massive demonstration to Ealing Town Hall on April 22 to present a petition demanding that the fascists should be refused permission to meet in Southall. The meeting also decided not to resort to confrontation with the police, and to organise a complete shutdown on April 23. This was a *Hartal*. It is quite a common tactic in India, and it was 100% successful in Southall. We had decided to organise a massive peaceful sitdown in the streets around the Town Hall. Unfortunately some, particularly among the youth, wanted to establish themselves independently and wanted to be seen as more revolutionary. They did not realise the importance of total unity in the town. They did not come to the April 11 meeting, or on the demonstraton on April 22, in the beginning.

The Anti-Nazi League mobilised many people from outside to come to Southall on April 22 and 23, but they in their publicity material and their speeches endorsed the decisions taken by the April 11 meeting.

The police, especially the SPG, were totally provocative. They kicked and hit. They abused — particularly the youth, but also old people as well. The whole Indian community and all who demonstrated againt the fascists were attacked. It was clear to the SPG that the whole community was on the streets that day protesting against the NF. The whole community is trembling with rage at the actions of the police, except a few boot lickers who were proud to attend wine and cheese parties with police officials in the police station. What happened to those arrested in the cells is common knowledge.

The trial of 342 is going on 20 miles away in Barnet, and this too is deliberate. Barnet court is notorious for their authoritarian attitude. Witnesses are being intimidated. For the first time for 100 years a magistrate has charged a witness and fined him. 60-80 people could go to prison. This is the biggest attack ever made on one town that I know of. It must have been a deliberate policy by the police to do this.

Blair Peach died in that police attack. Four days later 15,000 people marched absolutely peacefully in the streets of Southall to commemorate him. Southall is now seen as the forefront of the fight against racism.

You were elected to the National Executive Committee of the Communist Party in 1971, and throughout the period since then have been a mass leader in the Southall community, and a leading figure in anti-racist politics in Britain. How have you seen the relationship between these things?

Well, I am an immigrant, and a worker. Nobody needs to teach me what poverty is. It was but natural to be a Communist. Marxism is the strongst philosophy in the world, and it has changed the face of the earth. I am a humble soldier of the Communist Party. My feeling is that the Party has always been principled and consistent in its approach against racism, and racist immigration laws — although I have sometimes criticised it for not doing enough.

I well remember the part played by the Party in helping establish the CPI. The news, activities and campaigns covered by the *Morning Star* are amazing. I always say that the *Morning Star* should be seen as though someone is trying to squeeze the whole sea into a cup.

Black people in this country are part of British society and the working class. We play our part in the movement to which we belong. So do I. Our interests are not separate. We may have specific problems, being exploited as workers and as blacks, and we must build up strong ethnic organisations. IWA Southall is an example of one of the best self-help groups. We should enrol our members in the trade unions. The more the trade unions are aware of our problems and stand up to be counted, the better.

This is a movement for human rights, for democracy. There are things which can only be fully won when we have socialism in Britain. For this the Communist Party will have to create ideological consciousness among the workers, and provide eyes to look ahead. Without that vision, without that light, the working class will be in the wilderness. They will be fighting for their economic rights, but that is not all there is. There lies the role of the Communist Party. I would like to see more black people joining the Party to help achieve socialism.

Thank you Vishnu. □

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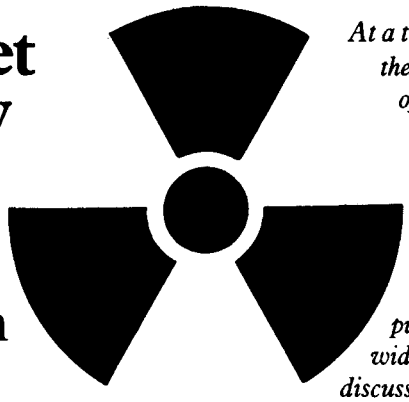
The Soviet Nuclear Energy Programme

N Dollezhal and Y Koryakin



At a time when the US has announced a moratorium on the issue of the further licenses for the construction of nuclear power stations and when there is considerable disquiet in the UK over the civil nuclear plans of the Tory government, it is interesting to compare the attitudes and analysis of the Soviet Union on this issue.

We publish below extracts from an interesting and important Soviet article, which was recently published in Kommunist No 14 *and which was widely commented upon in the British press. It discusses, within the context of commitment to a major programme of nuclear development, the problems now confronting the programme and the growing importance of environmental questions.*

Nuclear power projects are now being built all the time. They have become 'conventional', so to say. This factor often tends to push into the background the significant developments in this new and vital sector of Soviet power generation. However, the value of everything is established through comparison. Today the Soviet Union is putting into operation nuclear power generating facilities at the rate of about two million kilowatts a year. Is that a big or a minor achievement? It is, beyond doubt, a big achievement. It should be borne in mind that in the period from 1954, when the world's first atomic power station (APS) was commissioned, to 1970 (i.e. in a period of 16 years) the USSR put into operation several atomic power stations with a total capacity of 1.5 million kilowatts.

At the same time the present achievement may be regarded as a minor one, if we compare it with the future scale and rate of expansion of nuclear power generating plants and the role nuclear power is to play in the country's total power supply. It appears that by the end of the next decade the USSR will be increasing the capacity of atomic power stations at the rate of five-eight million kilowatts a year. It is quite probable that by the end of the century this indicator will rise to 10 million kilowatts. And this is already comparable with the rate of growth of the capacity of all power generating facilities in the USSR.

Nuclear power generation exists as an independent sector in the national economies of many countries. At present it is hoped that the problem of energy supply for mankind will be solved through the development of nuclear power facilities, i.e. through increasing the contribution of atomic power stations to total supply of electricity. The constantly mounting difficulties connected with the supply of conventional fuel (oil and natural gas above all), on the one hand, and the achievements of nuclear physics on the other, show that these hopes are well founded and that they are bound to be realised. Approximately 30 countries are operating and building atomic power stations. At least another 20 countries, including petroleum exporting states, have announced plans for the construction of such stations. The latter regard the development of nuclear power generating facilities as a promising sphere for the investment of accumulated petro-dollar reserves and as a way for saving national oil resources.

It is believed that by the end of the century nuclear fuel will account for 45% of the total quantity of fuel consumed by the electric power stations of the world, and by the year 2020 — up to 60%.

The USSR is building most of its atomic power stations in the European part of the country. Though their cost is much higher than that of thermal electric power stations of the same capacity, they have proved adequately economical, because they help save on the cost of fuel in regions lacking fuel and other energy resources. In addition to this, there is a marked tendency towards a rise in the real cost of every additional unit of organic fuel extracted and of the electricity produced from it. This factor operating against the background of rapid technological and economic progress in nuclear power generation has contributed to the steadily rising economic role of atomic power stations.

Fuel Economy

Atomic power stations have helped save large quantities of organic fuel. The economic effect from this is equally important. The atomic power stations to be commissioned in 1976-1980 in pursuit of the decisions of the 25th CPSU Congress are to save approximately 50 million tons of conventional fuel. It would have been impossible to extract this quantity of fuel on top of the plan and to deliver it from the eastern part of the country. If these atomic power stations had not been built it would have been impossible to solve a whole range of vital economic problems dependent on increased supplies of electricity. It should be mentioned that in the current Tenth Five-Year-Plan period (1976-1980) atomic power stations will account for more than one third of the increase in the capacity of the power generating facilities in the European part of the USSR. At the same time the overall capacity of the atomic stations is to increase nearly three to one.

In 1980 the APS will account for 10% of all the electricity generated in the European USSR as compared to 3.2% in 1975. Subsequently the APS will account for a larger part in the increase of capacity of the power generating facilities in this region.

In various countries large scale construction of nuclear power generating plants proceeded along different lines. Quite a few specific factors characteristic of every country largely determined the basic features of national policy in nuclear power engineering, and above all the types of nuclear reactors for the APS.

Types of Reactor

At present the USSR is making wide use of the so-called channel-type reactor which is rightly referred to as the Soviet type in other countries. It was designed and built in the 1940s when the USSR started working on atomic energy. Then, in keeping with the tasks of the power industry this design was successively applied in the construction of reactors for the First APS, Siberian, Beloyarskaya and Bilibinskaya APS etc.

Another type of reactor used in the USSR is the pressurised water (vessel) reactor. It is in wide use in other countries, because of its positive features.

Unlike channel-type reactors, vessel reactors demanded specialised engineering facilities. Thus, it was necessary to build a big and highly specialised atomic engineering works (Atommash) in Volgodonsk and

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to reconstruct the Izhorski Works in Leningrad.

Several years ago it seemed that the strategy for the further development of nuclear power engineering had been clearly defined. It briefly boiled down to the following. Commercial construction of APS with thermal neutron reactors would be accompanied by vigorous growth of the scale of APS construction. However, these reactors are capable of utilising only one or two per cent of the energy contained in uranium fuel. Therefore, the scientists decided that the thermal neutron reactors must be replaced with the more competitive fast neutron reactors. They generate another nuclear fuel — plutonium — in larger quantities than the initially burnt uranium. They actually effect extended reproduction of nuclear fuel.

This has made it possible to increase the fuel resources of the nuclear power industry by dozens of times and it saves the nuclear industry from the threat of depletion of commercial uranium resources.

However, this advantage can be realised only if the spent fuel, initially used at APS with thermal and fast neutron reactors, is quickly and economically reprocessed and re-used in reactors.

Difficulties with the Fast-Breeder

In the last few years the forecasts for the construction of APS have become more moderate. Thus, the expansion of nuclear power generating facilities by 1985 dropped from the initial forecast of 500 million kilowatts to 300 million (i.e. by 60 %) and by 2000 from the initial forecast of 3000-5000 million kilowatts to 1300-1650 million (i.e. from 50 to 30%). The forecasts with respect to the USSR have also shown a drop. As compared to previous estimates the specific cost of construction of APS has incresed considerably. For instance, as compared to 1967 it has increased seven- or even eight-fold in the USA.

The tendency towards higher cost is evident, despite the major increase in unit capacity of power generating units and other achievements that have lessened specific costs. The causes of this tendency are numerous and complicated and views vary on some of them. They call for special discussion, for they are conditioned by objective economic factors.

At the same time it should be mentioned that the commercial competitive capacity of atomic power stations has not dropped because similar economic tendencies are observed in the construction of conventional power stations, too.

The difficulties in the development of commercially economical APS with promising fast neutron reactors have proved to be greater than expected. Initially it was expected that large capacity commercial APS with fast reactors would be developed by the early 1980s. However, owing to the above difficulties it is now believed that they will appear at the end of the century. It follows herefrom that the effects of the reduced requirements in uranium when introducing such reactors in nuclear power generating systems will be achieved only in the next century.

The rate of expansion of atomic power stations' capacities has declined. The forecasts on the futher construction of atomic power stations have become more moderate. There has been a delay in the development of commercially profitable fast reactors. These factors have prolonged the economically justified use of atomic power stations with thermal reactors. That was why the problem of fuel supply for nuclear power stations has become less acute: first, the demand for nuclear fuel has dropped and, second, owing to the higher economic competitive capacity of APS as compared to organic fuel burning stations, it has become commercially expedient to extract and process the poorer uranium ores. It follows that the fuel base for nuclear power stations has expanded.

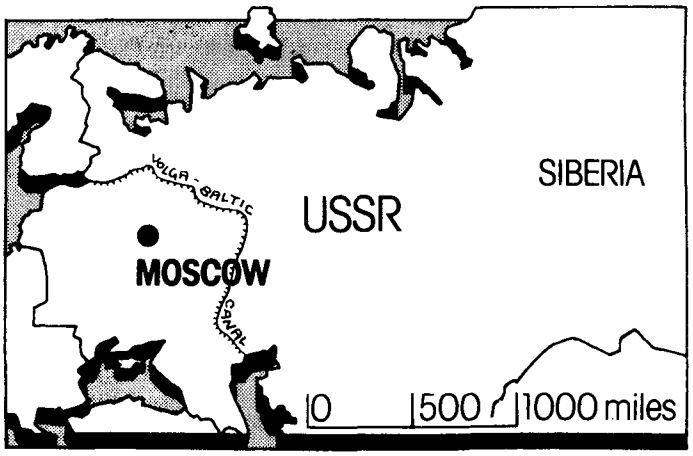
The views on the problems facing the external fuel cycle in nuclear energy production have also changed. Since it is now expected that commercial APS with fast reactors shall appear at a much later time, the need of reprocessing the spent fuel has become less acute. The purpose of reprocessing is to extract secondary fuel — plutonium — which is most effectively used in fast reactors.

Environmental Problems

Though the whole world is paying serious attention to these matters, and though major progress has been made on the way to their solution, we cannot yet say that guaranteed, reliable, commercially economical and effective processes have been developed for all stages in the production of the external fuel cycle. In addition to this, these processes still have to stand the test of time. It should also be mentioned that the cost of all basic processes in this cycle is far greater than preliminarily estimated. Therefore, in our view, in the forthcoming stage of development of nuclear power engineering it will be necessary to draw attention to another important problem, namely to the location of nuclear power stations and to the organisation of the functioning of the entire nuclear power complex. This problem is to a considerable extent connected with the problem of protection of environment.

Until now we have observed an economically justified desire to bring the sources of energy closer to the points of consumption. So far it was not necessary to balance the size of the power generating facilities against their possible influence on environment. In the past the industries were relatively small. Therefore, the ecological capacity of environment could be regarded as practicaly infinite. Today it is no longer possible to proceed from such a premise. The scope of electrification is tremendous. In making out forecasts and plans for the development of nuclear power generating facilities it is necessary to bear in mind its specific features.

We should also be aware of the fact that the major scientific acheivements of the last few years may, probably, result in the creation, within the next 15-20 years, of super-powerful electric stations working on the principle of thermonuclear reactions. The achievements of Soviet physicists' progress in experimental development of the cardinal structural units and possibilities for broad international cooperation in this field, which are being opened, provide indisputable grounds for such an assertion.



At present practically all the Soviet APS are being built in the European part of the country west of the Volga-Baltic Canal line. About 60% of the USSR's population live in this region. The density of the population here is rather high. This area also accounts for the largest part of the industrial and agricultural output. A sizable portion of the arable lands is also in this area. At the same time mass-scale travel is developing here. The network of rest homes for the working people and reservations is being expanded. The value of

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historical and cultural monuments and centres, areas of local nature and landscapes is mounting. Here the environment is being regarded more and more as the habitat rather than a source of natural resources. Resources are often interchangeable, whereas territories as such are irreplaceable.

We believe that, society's demand for energy skyrocketing, the distribution of APS in keeping with the present principle will soon exhaust the 'ecological capacity' of the region. What factors determine its limit? It appears that by the permissible effect on environment of all the power generating facilities located in it, inevitable heat discharges, alienation of land, irrecoverable losses of water through evaporation, accumulation of waste and negative effect of a number of additional measures for environmental protection on the cost of energy production.

However, it is expected that already in the near future nuclear power generating facilities will be developed on a tremendous scale.

The Dangers of Accidents

The problem of water resources is also serious. The gross annual water consumption by thermal and atomic electric power stations exceeds 100 cubic kilometres. It should be mentioned that the irrecoverable losses of water through evaporation in the European part of the USSR exceed two cubic kilometres a year. This water is dispersed as a result of discharge of heat by the electric power stations.

The ecological problem has an additional aspect in the case of nuclear power engineering, namely accompanying radio-activity. When APS are located over a wide area the measures for protection are not limited to localisation of radio-activity to the station, but also include many railway and, perhaps, other transport routes in the country. For a number of objective reasons spent fuel can be transported from APS only in small quantities. The probability of accidents per unit of distance over which such a cargo is carried is believed to be negligible. However, it is expected that already in the near future nuclear power generating facilities will be developed on a tremendous scale. Therefore, the quantities of spent fuel and the distances over which it will be carried will increase considerably. In this context it would be wrong to ignore this probability. In the USSR care for the preservation of human health forms one of the cardinal social tasks. This means that the relative cost of ensuring radiation safety will increase.

Atomic sources of energy are undoubtedly a historical necessity. They have splendid prospects before them. We would like to point out that in the case of atomic sources of energy (just like in everything else) it is especially important to know the right measure.

Thanks to a number of factors it was, apparently, technically and economically expedient and ecologically permissible to apply the principle of dispersion in the construction of APS. These factors are: the distribution of energy consumers over a large territory, relatively low level of energy consumption by them, a relatively low level of unit capacity of APS, relatively small scale of construction of nuclear power generating facilities (whose stucture has only started to take shape) and of their mains, and absence of regular traffic transporting highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel in considerable quantities. However, we do not believe that these factors will remain valid in the remote future, when the scale of construction of nuclear power generating facilities has grown immensely.

New Principles for the Organisation of Nuclear Power

What is the way out? On the one hand, it is impossible to build up the power supply basis for advanced socialist society without the development of nuclear power generating facilities. However, on the other hand, the mounting negative effects and consequences following from the development of nuclear power generating facilities have already created difficulties in the solution of certain economic problems. More than that, they may give rise to even greater difficulties in the immediate future.

Naturally, improvements in the quality of power generating facilities help solve the ecological and economic problems posed by the construction of nuclear power stations. However, it is more necessary than ever to search for new principles for the organisation of the nuclear power generating complex, principles that would better meet the new requirements of ecology and economy, the essence of utilisation of nuclear fuel and large-scale construction of APS. These new principles should also help realise in fuller degree the advantages of the Soviet social system and planned economy.

It appears that the proposal to combine in the future newly-built APS into large nuclear power generating complexes may furnish a more radical and rational solution from several points of view. Such power generating complexes may be built at certain distances from inhabited areas. The site could provide room not only for a group of APS with a total capacity of several tens of millions of kilowatts, but also plants and facilities of the secondary fuel cycle (radiochemical reprocessing of nuclear fuel, treatment, burial and, perhaps, expedient use of radioactive waste products, fabrication of nuclear fuel, and also specialised inner transportation of nuclear materials).

Power Generating Complexes

We maintain that in the USSR it is possible in principle to locate such power generating complexes in areas with a low density of the population, with enough land unfit for other uses and is of lower value, where adequate water resources are at hand. In addition to this, these areas should be relatively close to energy consuming centres that have already taken shape or have good prospects for development.

The principle of creation of power generating complexes would, probably, facilitate more efficient organisation of construction, operation, effective control and provision of all the necessary services, and also rational use of the available labour resources.

Estimates show that the creation of nuclear power generating complexes promises definite economic gains. The inevitable additional costs (arising mainly from the need to build big power transmission lines) will be compensated by reduced spending on a number of items that are inherent in APS built in keeping with the principle of dispersion. As far as ecological and especially radio-ecological requirements are concerned the concept of construction of power generating complexes is undoubtedly preferable.

In our opinion, the concept of power generating complexes best conforms to the technological and economic nature of nuclear power generating facilities. At the same time it best meets the requirements of socialist principles of management. Other countries, the USA for instance, have been studying the technical feasibility and economic profitability of such complexes. In its evolution the concept passed through several typical stages. In the course of these stages the researchers have successively mastered the means essential for each phase of knowledge and practice with account of the specific features and processes involved in the coversion of energy, the economics of new methods of power generation, the system character of energy production and power ecology. The new stage of development of this concept should not only take account of the scientific, technological and concrete economic aspects, but also examine it in organic unity with the whole set of socially significant factors.

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Discussion

The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance

Laurence Harris

The contribution by Sam Aaronovitch to the debate initiated by Dave Cook and Mick Costello (*Marxism Today* December 1978, June 1979, September 1979) is singularly unhelpful. In essence the article merely presents us with a set of slogans within which we are required to choose. The slogans are now familiar: broad democratic alliance *or* the working class alone (as if any Communist supported the latter tactical base); industrial struggle *or* community politics; the CP and trade unions *or* these plus the Labour Left.

Perhaps the most significant and ringing slogan is that which declares Mick Costello guilty of *economism* as compared with his critics' correct *political* revolutionary struggle. It would, I think, be interesting to analyse whether the tactics and arguments advocated by Mick Costello do have any resemblance to the arguments against struggle which Lenin castigated as economistic. Can we really say that an objective of ending capitalism lock, stock and barrel through struggle is the same as economism? However, although interesting, it is not my intention to deal with that issue here. Instead, I shall attempt to demonstrate the confusion in the choices Sam Aaronovitch offers us by examining some of the most fundamental categories of strategic analysis.

Underlying the *British Road to Socialism* we have the following categories. First, society is seen in terms of antagonistic and non-antagonistic classes as the fundamental social groups. Second, there are specific forms of oppression and exploitation which do not exactly coincide with class conflict but are fundamentally determined by it (racialism, for example, oppresses not only working class blacks but is undoubtedly determined by, as well as affecting, class struggle). Third, there are, in principle, specific struggles which can be distinguished under the broad headings of economic, political, and ideological struggle although concrete struggles involve combinations of these elements. Fourth, there are particular forms of class organisation such as trade unions, the Communist Party, the Labour Party, each of which has a distinctive role.

Each of these four fundamental categories has within it difficulties which have been the subject of intense debate within the Party. The most important of these concerns the definition of the working class itself. Does it include office workers, managers and technicians of various types or should these (or some) be seen as belonging to a new middle class? The question is crucial for the theory of the broad democratic alliance (BDA) and the leading role of the working class within it, but it remains unresolved. Nevertheless, for present purposes we can circumvent that debate: since Sam Aaronovitch agrees that there is '"an historically evolved core" of the British working class' I shall mean that 'core' when I refer to the working class.

Classes

Under the first category, *classes*, the Party's strategy conceives of an alliance, the BDA, between the working class and other classes with the former playing the leading role. It is a fault of Dave Cook's article, which Sam Aaronovitch defends, that it concentrates on discussing how the non-working class elements have an objective interest in joining such an alliance. It is concerned to demonstrate the small and medium capitalists, for example, have an interest in struggling against international monopoly capital, but it generally ignores the question of how to unify the working class itself and forge it into the leading force of the alliance. This error of Dave Cook's in the understanding of the BDA is often shared both by its defenders and its ultra left critics.

The central, immediate question of the BDA is not how to build an alliance with anti-monopoly capitalist groups (although the dangers and problems of such an alliance do have to be faced in specific issue campaigns such as that against the EEC). Instead, the burning question is how to transform and bring in the *Sun* readers, Tory voters and Labour right wingers of the working class itself; how to tap the proletarian instincts and experience of the working class and ensure that it does exist as the leading class rather than as the support for reformism (or even for reaction and racialism in the case of some sections). Forging the unity of the working class itself is, of course, conditioned by the strategy that is adopted with respect to other classes and groups, but the problem of how to do it has a centrality and urgency of its own.

Under the second category, *forms of oppression*, the *British Road to Socialism* and, surely, all communists, recognise that racial and sexual oppression are significant forms which are distinct from the economic exploitation and political repression of the whole working class. Organisation around the issues of these specific forms is an important focus for struggle. However, it will be disastrous if the Party conceives these struggles as independent of class struggle, as if the groups involved in those struggles were social groups without a class position and with a status equal to classes (as if working class youth, blacks, women, etc, did not differ from their bourgeois siblings). Such errors can and do cause particular candidates to be supported for elected positions within the Party because they are young or female and for that reason alone.

Forms of Struggle

Under the third category, *forms of struggle*, Sam Aaronovitch argues that it is essential to move beyond economic struggle to political struggle but the distinction between these (and other forms such as ideological struggle) is not analysed. Perhaps it is thought that the concepts are well understood so that explanation is unnecessary, but in fact, they are highly problematic. It is valid in principle to distinguish economic, political and ideological struggles at a high level of abstraction. It we do so political struggle surely concerns the control of the functions of the state, the legal framework and democratic rights; and economic struggle concerns not only conflicts over wages but also struggles over the speed of the production line, unemployment, and matters such as housing policy. Thus, if Sam Aaronovitch's idea of 'economism' means concentration on economic struggle it is erroneous for him to criticise the tendency by contrasting it with the virtuous struggles over 'the issues of jobs, impact of technology, quality and character of the services and the environment'. What are these but economic issues? Moreover, although the distinction between political, economic, and ideological struggles may be made in principle any concrete struggle is necessarily a complex one involving each of these elements. How can it be argued that struggles against racial and

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sexual oppression are non-economic struggles — are hindered by economic struggle — when they are themselves complex struggles with an important economic aspect?

The fourth category employed in the *British Road to Socialism*, the institutions and *organisations* of class struggle, is one which has been subject to as many confusions as the previous categories. In recent debates it has been a common error to identify trade unions with economic struggle, and the CP and Labour Party with political and ideological. That mistake has not arisen in such a simplistic form in the present debate. Instead, we find confusion over the nature and roles of our Party and the broad democratic alliance. Thus, Sam Aaronovitch argues that far from having as its objective the ending of capitalism, the BDA will have objectives which are not definable because 'the BDA as it comes into being, is *the property of the forces that constitute it*; its objectives will evolve with that alliance as will its component parts' (emphasis added). If the emphasised phrase means anything it denies the leadership role of the Party within the BDA for it denies the idea of the BDA having a leadership.

Leadership

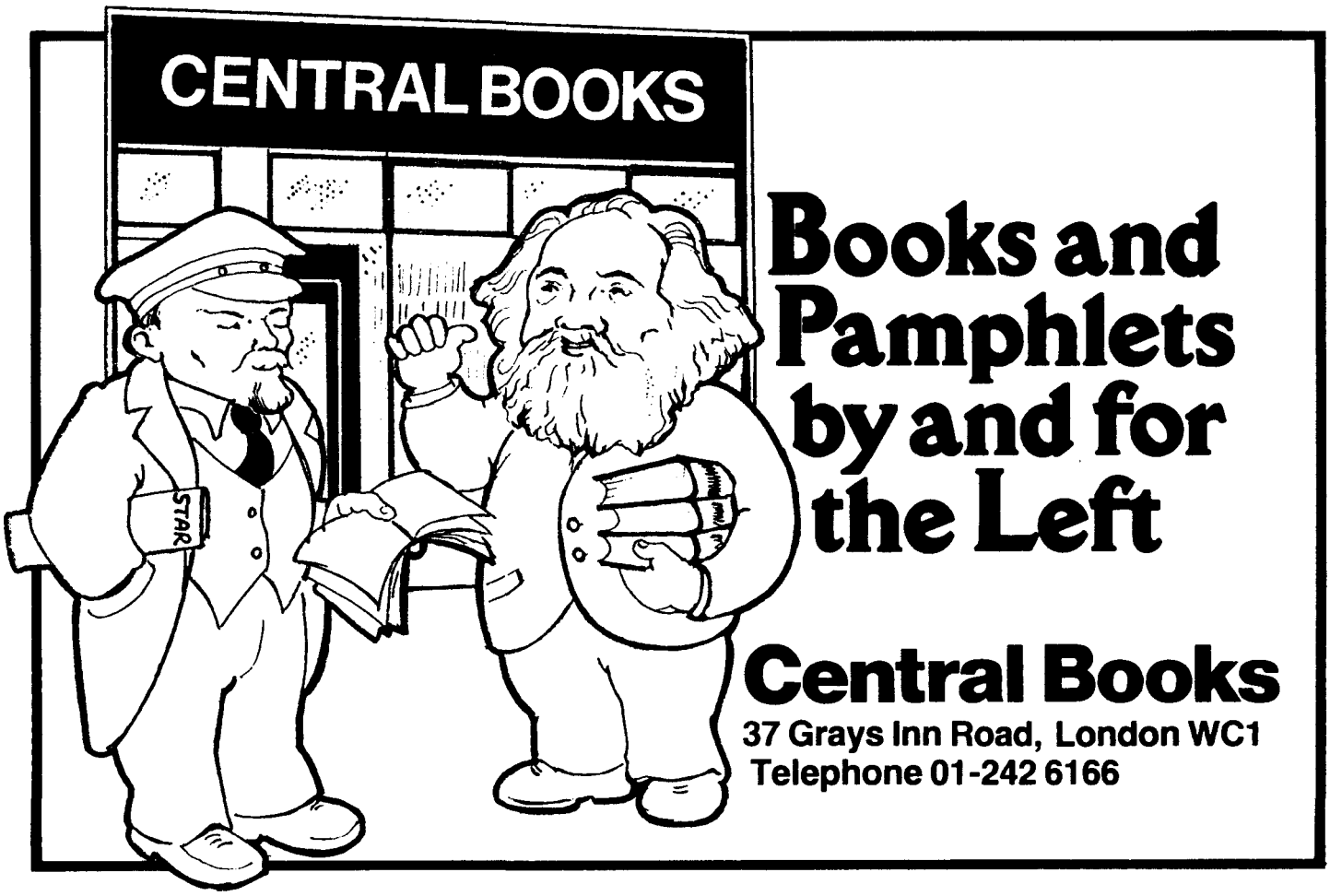
The rejection of the idea that the Communist Party should provide real leadership and that Party members should carry the Party line into the movement as a whole is made explicit in each of the contributions made by Dave Cook, Sam Aaronovitch, and Gaby Charing (*Marxism Today* October 1979). The last writer, for example, castigates Mick Costello because:

> 'for him the differences in the component parts of the alliance are contained in the "as yet limited aims and the different *subjective* positions taken up by them". To this, counterpose the Party's *objective* understanding of the reality of class relations under capitalism. The language of "subjective" and "objective" suggests that "we" know better, that "we" have the path mapped out for "them". Is this democracy?'

To the writer's rhetorical question the answer must be 'yes'. Whatever one thinks of the language of 'subjective' and 'objective' Mick Costello's view that the Party is the only organisation able to provide *leadership* because of its *correct* understanding and the *line* formulated on the basis of it is the view that gives our Party its *raison d'être*. The Leninist concept of the Party as the vanguard is at the historical roots of the CPGB; the idea of a vanguard and leadership has been modified in the development of the Party and in successive issues of the *British Road*, but it has never been dropped. Are the attacks on the idea of leadership which we read in the present debate to be taken seriously? If so, and if successful, they will leave us with no Party worth worrying about.

Primary Task

I think it is important to recognise that there are several concrete forces which also pose a threat to the existence of traditional forms of organisation and ultimately the Party itself. The drastic restructuring of British capital which we are experiencing and trying to affect is destroying at the local and industry level the trade union and other organisations of the labour movement which have been constructed over the past century. When whole sections of industry are being closed down and large groups of workers, however militant traditionally, see no alternative to accepting redundancy payments and going, the brave exhortations of Party trade unionists to 'Resist!' are merely signals of the knowledge that the organisations they have led are in danger of disintergrating. The frequency with which this is occurring has an important implication. *The primary* task of our Party at present is to defend, rebuild, and transform the labour organisations within which it has worked. Its relations with all organisations must be considered in the light of this overriding need. □



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Reviews

G D H COLE AND SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

A W Wright

Clarendon Press: Oxford,
1979. 301p £12.50

This is an excellent book; carefully constructed and admirably lucid; altogehter one of the most useful texts on socialist thinking in the twentieth century that is to hand. What Dr Wright has done in this volume is to delineate, symphathetically but not uncritically, the successive phases of G D H Cole's economic and social ideas and political attitudes over the five decades of his active life in the labour movement; and since Cole was always concerned with a practical relevancy, ever anxious to serve the contemporary needs of the movement, we are constantly involved, in reading this volume, with the theoretical and practical problems of our own time. This is not to say that Cole was always the most influential intellectual of his day, or that he was always appreciated. Indeed, there were periods when he seemed unimportant as a social or socialist theorist, when his ideas on tactics or strategy were either not clear or specific enough, or were submerged beneath the extraordinary flood of published work, of a remarkable variety, that appeared under his own name or as joint work with his wife Margaret Cole. It certainly can be argued that Cole wrote too much, and that had he not done so his influence upon his own generations, or his long term reputation, might have been greater. But one cannot be sure about this, for Cole was one of the great educators of the British labour movement, and the impact of his voluminious writings on his contemporaries was considerable. It is, however, precisely because Cole wrote so much, and in so many different fields, that it has been difficult often to define exactly Cole's theoretical position at any one time; and it is the merit of Dr Wright's book that he has provided clear guide lines to Cole's thought throughout his long career.

Cole, then, always reacted to the main political currents of his time. Thus his early years were dominated by the great industrial struggles before the first world war. He himself became a Guild Socialist — described sometimes and not altogether fairly, in Cole's case at any rate — as 'syndicalism without tears'; and while he later came to deny many of the basic assumptions of Guild Socialism in some matters he remained influenced in quite crucial ways by these early beliefs. It was the pluralistic nature of Guild Socialism that especially attracted Cole; it emphasis upon 'the creative energy of human will and imagination'; the development of a community of self-governing associations that would be based upon a community consciousness as the expression of a Rousseau-like general will. Powerful ideas which have become important and relevant again in our own day with the resurgence of the ideas of worker's control. But there were always tensions and contradictions within Guild Socialism, in its theory and its practice, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 exposed many of them, above all in the quite inadequate theory of the state. In the decade of the twenties which followed, Cole abandoned political theory for history, biography and economics, and only in 1929 did he publish his next major book which attempted to provide the labour movement with an immediate political and social programme. This was *The Next Ten Years in British Economic and Social Policy*. It represented a rejection of much of Guild Socialist doctrine, and its general approach, and it may be fairly described as a moderate social democratic analysis of social possibilities and prospects. Its understanding of the state was Fabian. 'What really matters', he wrote 'is not ownership but control of policy . . . Let the state control the nation's industries and it need not care who owns them, as long as it has the unfettered power of taxation in its hands'.

This was in 1929, the result of Cole's new thinking in the twenties. But 1931 was not long in coming and for Cole, as for so many, the break up of the second Labour government and the subsequent fraudulent General Election, against the background of world economic crisis, was a traumatic experience; and it meant a radical revision of his ideas. He was involved with a new socialist strategy, the starting point being the recognition that the existing parliamentary system was 'an admirable instrument for the preservation of capitalism'. He wrote this in 1932, in his *A Plan for Britain*, and during the

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next decade he was centrally concerned with the problem of the transition to socialism, given a working class party representing the majority of the industrial working class, operating within a bourgeois democratic society in which a parliamentary system was deeply rooted. In other words he was involved in first defining and then trying to answer exactly the same range of problems that we confront today. His solution was a very interesting mixture of the constitutional and the revolutionary. He accepted parliamentary democracy, but recognised that the assumptions and procedures of parliamentarianism would defeat any serious attempt to initiate a genuine socialist programme. So a Labour government must preface its work by the abolition of the House of Lords, followed by a general Enabling or Emergency Powers Act, with sweeping powers, in order to avoid what he called dislocation and no doubt meant sabotage. To carry through the socialist transition the work load of parliament must be reduced, and the real task of administration would devolve upon a number of statutory commissions. What Cole was asking for was a Labour Party of a new type, and that was never a political possibility in the 1930s. And today?

Inevitably, with this kind of prespective, Cole was isolated from the real sources of power within the labour movement. But further, and of moment for our generation, the contradictions which showed in his lively, always stimulating proposals during this decade before the second world war were never properly discussed and debated; and as so often in the socialist movement, intellectual excitement proved to be a substitute for realistic appraisal.

Cole's last decade before his death in 1959 was interesting. He never stopped thinking and he continued to be involved in the central issues of his day. His attitude to the Soviet Union, for example, was a serious attempt to avoid anti-communism while in no way abating his anti-Stalinism; he believed in the essential unity of international socialism although he never made a critical attempt to define that unity; he held firm to the socialist ideal throughout the years of the Cold War (much colder in Britain than often appreciated) without properly explaining the nature of socialism except in rather vague — but firmly libertarian — terms. In short, Cole recognised the problems, the tensions, the contradictions of demanding a socialist transformation from within bourgeois democracy; and the answers he gave to the questions raised oscillated between a revolutionary position and the Labourism of the movement to which he devoted his life. There were powerful influences pulling him towards the Labourist side, not least because his sense of relevance and his recognition of the possible were strong within him. It meant untidiness in his theorising; above all it involved him in a quite unsatisfactory analysis of the state and of state power. In the past two decades his writings on participatory democracy have begun to be studied again; we should now add his discussion, published in the years after 1931, of the problems of the transition to socialism. His answers to the questions he posed were often incomplete; some parts of the analysis were unsophisticated; he always came up against the fundamental labourism of the Party and the economism of the trade union movement. It can hardly be claimed that we are doing much better, and it is without doubt worth re-reading Cole in order the better to define our own problems. This book will be found a very helpful guide.

John Saville

M/F Nos. 1, 2 and 3
£1.20 per issue
Feminist Review Nos. 1, 2 and 3
£1.50 per issue

Two recent journals concerned with feminism: *m/f*, started in 1978 and published twice a year by a small editorial group of women and containing some contributions from men; *Feminist Review*, appearing three times a year since the beginning of 1979 and produced by 'a collective of women based in London with help from women and groups all over the country'. How does each journal present itself? What issues are prioritised? What connexion is made with the Women's Liberation Movement?

'*m/f* a feminist journal', is the cover statement with a design of two colour contrast identical triangles that gives an 'equal–but different' impression. The title is not explained inside but the journal itself is described as being 'within the Women's Movement and addresed to it'. More specifically, it addresses the development of socialist feminism within the movement, and its first editorial says '*m/f* places itself as a predominantly theoretical journal and we believe that at this moment this work is of major importance for feminism. But we also believe that politics cannot be "read off" from theory and that theory can never be a substitute for politics. One of our foremost aims therefore will be the development of a theoretical debate on women's politics; a debate which must take place in relation to existing socialist and feminist politics'.

This involves the editorial group and contributors in a closely collaborative project of rethinking and reformulating the dimensions of socialist feminism. It is 'making an intervention' which requires systematic attention to the ways certain concepts and categories are currently employed in debate. This means, for instance, a critique of those arguments that seek to tack on to a 'traditional' or 'classic' marxism theories about sexuality and the position of women and then treat them as if they were simply forgotten or inadvertently neglected aspects of marxism. There can be no question, either, of attempting to meld together, as somehow complementary, concepts derived from the theories of psychoanalysis and historical materialism — a resolution which encourages unwarranted hops between aspects of psychic and social reality.

The proper and necessary concern the journal has with tendencies to fudge up concepts from distinct theoretical discourses leads to a questioning of how feminist analysis has worked with particular formulations, especially how the concept 'sexual division of labour' is introduced alongside class division, or the treatment of 'mode of reproduction' is made to chime with 'mode of production'. And particularly contradictory is the attempt to force a fit between a universalistic and essentialist concept of patriarchy, that accounts for the 'origin' of women's oppression, and a 'marxist concept of social totality with its corresponding causality of determination in the last instance by the economic'. This involves 'an impossible recourse to two "materialisms"' (— Mark Cousins, 'Material Arguments and Feminism', *m/f* 2 — an influential article that presents the most cogent expression of the whole critique).

With coherently sustained and trenchant argument, the contributors of *m/f* follow through various examples of these 'failures of inadequate conceptualisation' to demonstrate how they founder upon eclecticism, collapse into reductionism, get shored up by orthodox notions of 'socialisation' which posit 'individuals' operated on by 'society', or come to rest on variants of sociological functionalism whereby the oppression of women, or 'sexism' is seen as 'necessary' to the continuance of capitalism.

But the project of *m/f* goes further than a useful and careful demonstration of the need for conceptual clarification. It raises this problem: are the questions that these concepts, however muddled, were designed to address even the necessary or relevant ones to ask in the first place? For instance, granting the inconsistencies and illegimimate usages of the terms 'patriarchy' and 'sexual division of labour', would there still be any point to enquiring into the material bases of

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the subordination of women and the particular historical forms these take, or considering levels of determination, or 'real conditions of existence'? It seems not — or rather, that such questions get displaced or removed out of significance once the concepts attaching to them are announced to be — and they often are — 'discredited'. There is then a tendency for the *m/f* project to move from the potentially helpful issuing of caveats and correctives towards the wholesale ordering of fiats and prohibitions whereby a wide range of problems and related strategic issues that the women's movement raises are simply disallowed or rendered misguided and unimportant.

This happens in the process of clearing the decks for the construction of a new problematic. *m/f* is involved in developing a form of discourse theory that starts with the questions: how are women produced as a *category* and constituted as 'subjects' and 'social agents' within specific discourses? Discourses highlighted by *m/f* include the law, medicine, psychoanalysis, or narrative forms, like films — and when contributors work through detailed examples, such as the representation of sexuality in *Cosmopolitan* or *Emmanuelle*, (Rosalind Coward, 'Sexual Liberation and the Family', *m/f* 1) or 'The Popular Film as a Progressive Text — a discussion of Coma', (Elizabeth Cowie, *m/f* 3), the approach is demonstrated as particularly exciting and productive. The difficulty is that it increasingly figures as *the only* productive approach.

In each analysis of discourse, they say, 'what is at stake is the organisation of *sexual differences* in social relations'. This is crucial because it decisively ousts the need to consider '*sexual division*' — a concept, which, by *m/f* 3, has come to have no explanatory power, relying as it must on simple and obvious unitary principles and presupposing two homogeneous social groups composed of individual subjects, 'actual men' who somehow 'do things' to 'actual women'.

m/f's prioritisation of sexual differences can then be identified with the aims of the women's movement thus: 'The women's movement is, by definition, about sexual differences and in particular the category of women . . . '

But this is only the case if the middle term 'liberation' and what it implies about power structures and the struggles against them is made to disappear. And indeed, 'liberation' is distinctly passé, an infantile memory belonging to the 'fantasy of utopianism'; while the terms it evokes, like 'oppression' and 'subordination' are the products of assumption and assertion, unproblematically grounded in experience or empirical observation. And from there it is just a short step via another list of conceptual errors to an interrogation of any feminist demand or slogan based on illusory appeals to individual choice, subjects, interests, rights, control-of-bodies, or the personal-as-political.

At the same time, *m/f* writers insist that politics can't be dictated by theory and guarantee respect for autonomy, 'the specific problems of women' and for strategic decisions made within the movement. But they can't disclaim responsibility for the sheer seductive momentum of their arguments. The logic demands assent all down the line: 'if we accept this, then . . . it follows that . . . of course'. It can't be gainsaid without further effort to widen the paradigm and reintroduce the terms of reference already spelt out. Meanwhile, *m/f* might meet outright refusal from feminists unless it can continue to stay clear of narrowing sectarian grooves.

Feminist Review's aims are: 'To develop the theory of Women's Liberation and debate the political perspectives and strategy of the movement. To be a forum for work in progress and current research and debates in Women's Studies'. With this brief, its articles come 'out of' the movement and reflect its diversity. Typical of the range in each issue would be something on women in the workplace, cultural and historical features, a piece of detailed research backing a particular campaign, a discussion of recent developments in feminist analysis and an account of a women's movement in a third world socialist country. Particular editorial emphasis is given to the need for an international perspective; and the latest editorial, reviewing the political changes of the last year, expresses concern to defend gains so far won and consider the relationship of the labour and women's movements while not neglecting 'the more experimental and subjective aspects of women's condition'.

All nineteen women on the journal's collective describe themselves as feminists and socialists, 'but we definitely do not see *Feminist Review* as a polemical vehicle for the socialist feminist tendency. On the contrary, we welcome contributions from any point of view within feminism . . '

What prevents this approach coming down to an anything-goes eclecticism has to do, not so much with a specification of the contents of the journal, but with a concern to develop a style of work according to the best practice of the women's movement. This means that one of the ordering principles of the journal is an insistence on *rigour* — not to appease the academy, but in order to make what may be difficult and new material clearly available and explicit. It goes with a detailed care taken over the presentation of articles: well set out on the page, fully illustrated and annotated, and with notes explaining what each contributor does, and her particular interests and perspectives.

An emphasis on accessibility and making contact also leads to promotion of activities *around* the journal: a series of readers' meetings in various cities after each issue is published, and encouragement to women's groups in Britain and abroad to discuss current articles and contribute their own. For 'we see the survival of *Feminist Review* as inextricably linked with the contribution the journal can make to the survival and growth of the women's movement itself'.

Particularly, this contribution has to do with 'helping to bridge the gap between academic and political work'. The journal describes the effects of present isolation in the twin tendencies of theoreticism and anti-intellectualism and offers 'to act as a vehicle to unite research and theory with political practice and contribute to the development of both'. This aim, based on developing collective and available styles of work, underwrites the diverse range of contents in each journal. It's implicit in the way articles are written, and also often explicitly addressed by contributors in a manifesto form: 'We are trying to move away from that compartmentalisation which prevents us from using what we learn for changing our own lives and those of other women, and from using what we experience to raise questions about what we know, how we know it and what we do about it. We are working towards new conceptions of experience, knowledge and politics, each one shaped by the others'. ('Personally and Politically: Feminist Art Practice' — Tricia Davis and Phil Goodall, *FR* 1).

Rosalind Brunt

Manuel Castells
CITY, CLASS AND POWER
The Macmillan Press, £3.95 (paper)

Doreen Massey and Alejandrina Catalano
CAPITAL AND LAND: LANDOWNERSHIP BY CAPITAL IN GREAT BRITAIN
Edward Arnold, £3.50 (paper)

To suggest that any book makes a particularly significant contribution to Marxist social science is bound to reflect certain personal priorities and judgements. But is a judgement which I believe is justified in both the cases of Doreen Massey and Alejandrina Catalano's *Capital and Land*, and Manuel Castells' *City, Class and Politics*, in excellent translation by Elizabeth Lebas. The significance of both goes beyond the social science

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enclave to which they appear, at first sight, to be addressed.

The major developments in Marxist theoretical work associated with the French philosopher Louis Althusser and the Greek political scientist Nicos Poulantzas have generated a number of conceptual excursions in the last decade which have been identified, in my view unfairly but forcefully, with a highly abstract form of debate, a cerebral activity with little reference to current issues or problems in the economic or political fields. Some socialists have sought to impose on these theoretical endeavours the test of whether they yield concepts that allow concrete study of real phenomena to proceed. The argument has been made that it is an indulgence to work exclusively within an abstract realm and that what is required is a set of tools with which to prise open and examine actual and existing social relations.

Traditionally, the social sciences have also been concerned with what is called the 'operationalisation' of concepts, because without application, the concepts remain 'philosophical'. Indeed, many Marxists have acknowledged that the theoretical system inherited from Marx himself — inevitably complex in the face of the canvas of history which he sought to address — contains some monumental problems of operationalisation. Many of the corner-stones of the labour theory of value (for example, the duration of 'necessary labour time') may be beyond any form of empirical expression.

It is to the great credit of Massey and Catalano, in a detailed study of landownership in Great Britain and its role in the operation of capitalism, and of Castells, in a series of studies of urban crises and struggles, that they attack aspects of the real world in the most concrete terms using a refined conceptual weaponry largely developed in the Althussarian frame of reference. There is nothing abstract about the world of land transactions among financiers or the continuing struggle between planners and communities considered in these books, yet neither eschews tough theoretical precision[1].

First, Massey and Catalano. Having established empirically the crises that have accompanied recent bouts of property speculation and the new tendency for finance capital institutions to buy into land as investment, they go on to demonstrate that the function of landownership, and particularly of 'rent' in capitalism is not a single or simple phenomenon. To treat it as such leads to imprecise political responses. They elaborate three forms of ownership — traditional landed (a form with surprising durability), industrial and financial; and the data presented on the precise patterns of each in Britain make it clear that the forms in which rent is extracted, and the kinds of interest incorporated in each, give rise to significantly different contradictions both between the forms, with capital in general and with the working class. Hence the necessity for varied political approaches; it is a case of knowing the enemy precisely.

These data, which will be of interest to anyone concerned with configurations of capitalist ownership and the distribution of surplus value, taken together with the theoretical innovations, provide a more rigorous, explanatory account of landownership than was attempted or achieved by the recent Royal Commission. They also do a great deal to unravel Marx's complex account of rent in *Capital, Vol III*.

Additionally, for those interested in inner city struggles, the discussion of the mechanism by which differential rents on more-or-less favourable sites contributes to equilibrium in profit levels, provides part of the basis for understanding the spacial distribution of socio-economic activities. The authors have, thus, contributed both concept and information for use by both theorists and activists (who are, of course, often the same people).

The authors are noticeably reticent about suggesting political directions, and although it is certainly not incumbent on them to do so, I am unhappy with formulae which suggest that political programmes are not presented because conditions have yet to mature. In the political arena there is seldom the luxury of awaiting ideal conditions. They probably never exist.

The point of contact with Castells is interesting. While Massey and Catalano show that the law of value organises the distribution of economic activities and that land-use patterns are not the simple result of capitalist anarchy, Castells continues to develop his novel thesis that land-use and differentiated activity principally result from the way in which consumption is organised in capitalism, and especially 'collective consumption'. That is to say that aside from those goods and services consumed by individuals in order to renew their capacity to labour and reproduce a new generation of labour, there is a domain of goods and services which can only be consumed by people collectively. The nature of the consumption of health, education, housing, transport and cultural resources demands their collective provision, and because they lie at the very heart of renewal of labour power, they can only be effectively provided by the concerted, central effort of Government. Their provision cannot be left to chance.

Urban collectivities must be planned with this in mind. Thus, and here again because of the working of the law of value, it is the plan that supercedes the anarchy, the planner who postdates the individual entrepreneur.

It follows that because the provision of such social resources is anything other than evenly distrubuted, it is subject to contradiction and struggle — over environment, community and planning. It is the political stength of Castells' argument that from conceptually precise foundations he demonstrates that these struggles open new theatres of alliance, novel agendas of tactics. As both practitioner and theorist he concludes that the working class and the new petty bourgeoisie may concert in what he calls 'urban trade unionism'.

It is by no means clear how the organisation that would be needed to accompany the spirit of such an invention is to be realised, but in each sphere analysed — battles over plans, urban renewal, ecological protest, and so on — he is strongly indicative. Indeed, those who have heard him speak on urban conflict under Franco in Madrid would confirm this general approach.

There remain some problems and areas for further exploration. First, attractive expressions like 'urban trade unionism' may understate the very prolonged forms of working-class experience at the core of such organisation. Second, I have a strong suspicion that his analysis of the consumption of urban resources and related struggles, while of demonstrable importance in shaping urban spaces, underestimates the realm of production as a 'shaper' of the urban environment particularly in the past. Such historical imprints tend to be indelible.

Among Castells' most remarkable achievements, with his Paris and Madrid colleagues, is that he has managed to resuscitate 'urban sociology', a fragment of the discipline rightly believed to be bereft of life after the disastrous interest taken in it for 40 years by the 'Chicago' school of sociology and some of their exported luminaries. It was distressing that an area of study so pertinent to the populations of industrialised societies should have been so thoroughly dispatched by its staunchest advocates who never escaped either their prudish, small-town American belief that cities were dens of iniquity or their misconceived pre-Keynsian economics. Under Castells' ministrations, urban sociology has risen, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of American sociology. It promises to be as central to sociology in the coming decade as the study of 'deviance' was in the last.

Dave Triesman

[1] Castells should be considered together with his seminars *The Urban Question*, Edward Arnold.

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NOTES

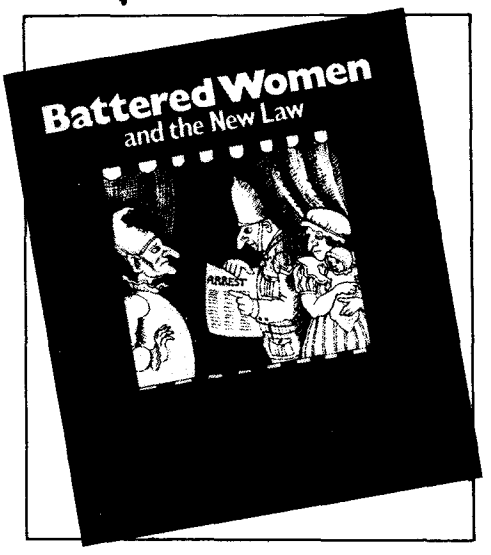
Labour Research

Brenda Kirsch writes: Labour Research embarks upon its 63rd year of publication, January 1980 will see its first issue in a new-style A4 format. *Labour Research* is the monthly publication of the Labour Research Department, the independent trade union research organisation founded by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1912. Originally known as the Fabian Research Department, with such eminent socialists as Bernard Shaw, G D H Cole and Robin Page Arnot being early active members, it began by researching into trade unions and soon found itself besieged by unions wanting their own information, into industry, profits and the state. The name was changed in 1918.

Through its history, the Department has been closely linked with workers' struggles: the engineers during the 1922 lockout, the miners in 1926, and the emergent anti-fascist movement, with exposés of the arms industry and Mosley's backers being a few examples. Since the war the work of the LRD in answering the needs of the labour movement has grown. Alongside Labour Research, the Department publishes a weekly Fact Service, the bi-monthly guide for negotiators, Bargaining Report, pamphlet guides to employment legislation etc, as well as answering thousands of enquiries each year from affiliates, who now number 1,800 organisations, including 49 national trade unions.

Labour Research combines regular features — on developments in industrial relations, government economic statistics, company profits — alongside articles covering economic developments, analyses of specific industries — motors, mining, telecommunications etc, — issues relating to the workplace, ranging from employment law to pay and conditions to health and safety (a growing area of coverage) — and political and social matters, such as the annual survey of company political donations. All areas are approached from the viewpoint of the needs of the labour movement, with presenttation of facts, which trade union activists can then utilise as they require, being the priority. The new-style *Labour Research*, while appearing in a larger and more readable format will continue to present its range of coverage, providing the facts required by the labour movement.

Labour Research from January 1980 costs 50p per month, annual subscription £6.96 from 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF (01-928 3649).



Battered Women

Jean Coussins writes: The Domestic Violence Act 1976 has been in force now for two and a half years, giving women some legal protection when they are battered by their husbands or cohabitees.

Wife-beating will not be eliminated through the law, but the woman's immediate predicament can be eased. The present Act has improved the help available by covering cohabitees as well as married women; allowing the power of arrest to be attached to a court order excluding the man from the matrimonial home; and by making immediate action by the woman possible whether or not divorce proceedings have been initiated.

A revised edition of *Battered Women and the New Law* by Anna Coote and Tess Gill (Inter-Action imprint and NCCL, 12 November 1979, 40pp, 85p) describes the Act's provisions in detail and tells women how to deal with the various stages involved, from filling in forms at the county court to handling the police and finding a solicitor. The pamphlet also assesses how the Act has been working in practice over the last two years, finding, for example, that the attitudes of judges vary considerably when it comes to attaching the power of arrest to an injunction. Recent cases are documented, and there is a section on how to get rehoused after experiencing domestic violence.

Since November 1979, the magistrates' courts have also had powers to deal with domestic violence. The pamphlet outlines the provisions available there too. A final chapter suggests how the law could be further improved, with the establishment of Family Courts and more funding for law centres and women's aid refuges.

The pamphlet is available from Inter-Action, 15 Wilkin Street, London NW5, or the National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

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